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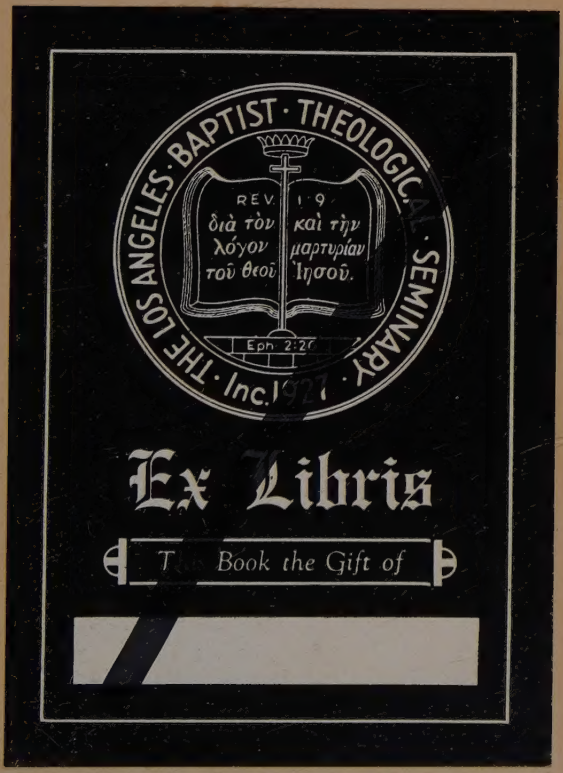

# SAMUEL TO AARON

# THE REPRESENTATIVE MEN OF THE BIBLE

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*By*
GEORGE MATHESON
D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.

VOLUME II

SAMUEL TO AARON

NEW YORK
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1930

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# PREFACE

By 'The Representative Men of the Bible' I mean the men of the Bible who represent phases of humanity irrespective of place and time; and I consider them only in those incidents in which they are thus representative. These studies are not historical; they are not critical; they are an analysis of the Portraits *as we see* them—without any attempt to inquire how or when they came. I have imagined myself in a studio, looking at the forms as delineated, and simply asking the question, What did the artist mean? Personally, I have no doubt as to the historical basis for the patriarchal life—not to speak of lives further down the stream. But I have been actuated in the meantime by the desire to find ground that is neutral to the two extremes—the Higher Criticism on the one hand and the Old Orthodoxy on the other. That common ground is the fact that the figures are now before us, and that, if there be a Revelation, it is through them, in the last result, that

the Revelation must come. Here, for the present, hands may be joined, here, for the time, views may be united; and those who differ as to dates and origins can meet in the recognition of a spiritual beauty. I have sought to give the book a semi-devotional tone by closing each chapter with a short invocation or prayer.

I offered the former series of studies as an experiment. I promised that if it met with acceptance I would issue another series of Bible Portraits covering nearly the same period but representing distinct qualities. I am glad that a rapid reception on the part of the public and a favourable recognition by the press has enabled me to fulfil this design. I call this a second series rather than a second volume. Any one who has not read the first may, if he will, begin with the second. Here and there I have made a reference to the previous series; but in every case it is passing and fugitive, and does not for a moment interrupt the context. The sequence of the volumes is of the less consequence because I do not think that either in this or the previous series I have ever struck the same note twice. The selection of Representative Characters

has been in my own hands, and it has been made on the principle that each personality shall exhibit a phase of human nature which has not been exhibited in the Portraits that have preceded it. The strength of the Bible Gallery lies not in the number but in the variety of its representations, and its highest artistic claim must ever be, that on the canvas of human life it has succeeded in delineating 'the manifold wisdom of God.'

G. M.

*Edinburgh. 1903.*

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# THE REPRESENTATIVE MEN OF THE BIBLE

## CHAPTER I

### SAMUEL THE SEER

I HAVE said that there is a distinction between the earlier and the later forms in the Great Gallery—that, contrary to expectation, we proceed from the ideal to the actual. We have seen the religious life beginning in that which transcends the life of the hour, seeking a larger environment than that which earth can give. We have seen the Adams claiming a wider garden, and the Enochs aspiring to a fairer world. The story of the Tower of Babel itself, though the record of an act of impiety, is singularly illustrative of the religious tendencies of the Early Gallery; it shows us the child-man still in search of a building 'behind the veil.' But, as we enter further into the Gallery, we have observed a change. We have witnessed in Moses the beginning of a new régime. Religion has come down from the clouds to tread the narrow way, the common, dusty way. This Gallery tells us it has

been with first faith as it is with first poetry. Poetry begins with the stars, and clothes celestial things in human forms. But by and by it descends. Its whole *history* has been a descent—a gradual stooping from the height to the valley. Each step has been a step nearer to the commonplace. Its dawn has been with the gods of mythology, its morning with the heroes of Homer, its forenoon with Dante's vision of human destiny, its midday with Milton's moral retrospect, its evening with Wordsworth's little girl sitting with her porringer beside the grave. Even such is the course which this Gallery claims for *religion* —a path from the high to the lowly, a road from the gold to the grey, a progress from the stones of the heavenly temple to the stones of the earthly quarry.

Is the Gallery right? Yes; it is true to experience. It describes the course of faith in the heart of every man. At the opening of life we see God in mysterious things—things which we cannot understand. We see Him in sudden death; we hear Him in the thunderstorm; we trace His footprints in the dread catastrophe. As we advance in years our standpoint is changed; we find God nearer the

ground. We begin to discover Him in what we *do* understand. We used to see His wonders in what we believed to be abnormal; but there comes a time when the marvel of a thing is its *naturalness*. The Psalmist says, 'Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things *in Thy law*'—'in Thy commonplace requirement.' He had always been able to find such marvels in what he believed to be *outside* the law—the miraculous, the supernatural, the inexplicable. But he feels that the triumph of worship only truly comes when God is reverenced in His *ordinary* steps and recognised in the objects of the common day. He feels that the summer of religion will only be reached in that hour when the duties of prosaic life shall be duties done to God, and when Man's interest in the affairs of Man shall be recognised as his surrender to the Father's will.

I can almost trace the steps of gradation which mark the phases of faith displayed by the Great Gallery. At the most remote end of the Gallery stands Enoch. He has a far-away look. His eye is upturned toward the heavens. His God is *there,* and he feels that he must ascend there to find Him. Then comes

Noah. With him the Divine Spirit is no longer a silent spectator in the *heavens;* He moves on the face of the waters; He reveals His presence in the flood. Religion has come into contact with the earth, has shown itself as a world-power. Still, it has only touched the world on a *grand* scale. It has revealed itself in a big catastrophe, in a mighty revolution, in a stupendous act of Providence. Man needs more than *that* for his spiritual sustenance. And so, as we traverse the Gallery, the Divine Spirit comes nearer still. It meets Man in his hours of special trouble. It meets the toiling Abraham under the oak of Mamre, the fretted Isaac in his struggles at Gerar, the impoverished Jacob in his pillow of stone at Bethel. Yet Man wants more than even this. Life is not made up of moments fraught with crisis. It is made up of moments fraught with commonplace; and, if we would have a present God, He must meet us *here*. And so, God draws nearer still to Man's ordinary day. He comes to Moses in the revelation of a universal law—the law of conscience dictating the duty between man and man. Can He approach closer than that? Yes. *That* was the revelation of God in the *community*. But I want more

than the life of the community; I want my own life made strong. Therefore, by and by, there appears in the Gallery a life distinguished only in this, that his physical strength is inspired by God, that his bodily force is stimulated and renewed by the direct action of the Divine Spirit. In that Picture—the figure of *Samson*, the Divine has come into closer touch with the human than even in the Portrait of Moses. *That* was the illumination of conscience; *this* is an illumination more condescending still—the entrance of the Divine strength into a tabernacle of human clay.

I shall not linger, however, before the figure of Samson. I pass him by, for the simple reason that he is not the climax of the process. The climax appears in the next figure—Samuel. In Moses we have God touching the moral man; in Samson we have God touching the physical man; but in Samuel we have a deeper stretch of condescension—God in communion with the life of a child. You have seen the noonday sun, in the course of its progress, centre for a moment its illumination on one corner of a valley. Even such is the illumination of Samuel. The light of heaven which has been long impending

reaches in him the corner of the valley. We see a meeting of extremes—God and the child. That Divine Life which has dwelt in the heavens, moved in the flood, throbbed in the night of Bethel, and glittered in the revealings of Sinai, is seen concentrating its whole energy on the inspiring of a little boy. It is the latest stooping of the Spirit of God which the Gallery has yet proclaimed. Come, and let us meditate on this bridal of the earth and sky, this newest marriage ring which God has wrought for Man! Let us try to disregard all local circumstances! Let us ignore the things peculiar to the time; let us fix our eyes on that which is universal! Let us consider the meaning of this Portrait, not to the house of Israel, not to the house of Eli, not even to that visible house of God where the Jewish Priesthood ministered, but to you and me, to the furthest ends of the world, to the heart and conscience of humanity!

In the days when the High Priest Eli was Judge of Israel, there appeared in the sanctuary of Shiloh a wonderful child; his name was Samuel. It was a dark and stormy time; there were fears within and fightings without. Israel was climbing a steep hill—arduously,

painfully. Her progress was slow; she was alternately worsted and victorious—to-day left in the valley, to-morrow gaining a height. And the struggle was more arduous from the fact that there was no prophecy. It was an age of materialism. The hands of Moses were no longer uplifted on the mountain; the eyes of Moses no longer gazed on a promised glory. Religion had become a form; its *spirit* had fled. There were few remains left of that heroic time when Joshua had fought for God, and Deborah had sung for God. The nation had lost its poetry, and had lost its faith. These had to be recreated, kindled anew at the lamp of heaven. Where was the new kindling to begin? Where was the Divine Spirit to touch the world once more? In the heart of the sage? No. In the breast of the old man? No. In the leaders of the Jewish armies? No. It was to begin in the soul of a little child. Out of the mouth of a babe in knowledge, God was to ordain strength. All Israel was startled by the tidings that there had appeared a prophetic *child*. From Dan to Beersheba there ran a thrill of wonder. Israel had been asking when the next Moses would appear. Here he came—in the garb of a tiny boy! Men were

speechless with surprise. It was a surprise that was never to be equalled until that day when Christ was to put a little child in the centre of the apostolic band.

Was he a miracle—this little Samuel? No—in the view characteristic of the Bible he is the real and normal aspect of humanity. So normal is he that Christ says we must all return to his state before we can become seers. What, think you, does Jesus mean when He declares that we can only realise the beauty of the kingdom through the eyes of a little child? Is it not simply this, that to see the beauty of anything we require a *first* eye? Take the Bible itself. Perhaps of all literary productions it is, from a literary point of view, the least appreciated. Why so? Just because its words are the most familiar. To see the beauties of the Bible, one would require to say to us what the prophet said to Hezekiah, 'Let the shadow go back ten degrees!' We should need to be transported back into life's morning, to divest ourselves of all preconceived opinions, to imagine that we were reading the record for the first time. That is precisely the standpoint which Christianity promises to create. It professes to make old

things new, in other words, to let us see the old things as they *looked* when they were new, and so to give us a true sense of their power and beauty. What is this but to recreate in us the life of Samuel! What is this but to say that the true seer must ever be a child, that, however grown-up he be, it is by the survival of his childhood that he sees the kingdom of God! Little Samuel is *no* miracle. He reveals the normal law of faith. He is the first of the prophets because he is the first of inspired children. He is a representative *man* in religion because he is a representative child. All seers of God's kingdom have seen it by the light of their childhood. We do not drop our childhood when we become men; we carry it with us *into* the life of men. Every sage bears within his bosom a little Samuel—an instinctive child-life which concludes without reasoning, adores without arguments, worships without symbols, prays without words. The man who listens to *this* voice is a prophet of the Kingdom.

Let us look now at the *form* in which this voice came to the child Samuel. We all like to witness the beginning of things. We learn more from the origin of a process than from

all its *future* manifestations. We are permitted to witness the first hour of the religious vision of Samuel. If that first hour were something abnormal, it would not be worth considering. But it is not abnormal; it is the rule according to which all Divine vision comes. There are two things about Samuel's illumination which are very prominent in the Picture, and which seem to me to be typical of religious illumination in general. Let us glance at each of them as they are exhibited in the Great Gallery.

The first is that the call of Samuel does not come to him as a call from heaven, but as a voice from earth. This is all the more remarkable in the light of the fact that from the very outset Samuel was placed in a religious environment. His parents wished him to be a *pious* child. From the dawn of his intelligence they consigned him to the care of the High Priest Eli, in whose house he became a servant. His employment was in the things of the sanctuary. He ministered in the temple of Shiloh. What he did, we do not exactly know. Of course, it must have been work external to the actual service of the sanctuary; yet he wore a little ephod to mark the fact

that he was engaged in temple duty. In any case, he was breathing every moment the atmosphere of the house of God and using every day the symbols of things Divine. We expect it will be in the discharge of these duties that his illumination will come. No. It is when the work of the day is done, when the little priest has retired to rest, that the message from heaven greets him. And it does not greet him *as* a message from heaven. A voice cries 'Samuel!'—he never dreams it is any other voice than that of Eli. He rises from his couch to get his orders from *human* lips; 'I did not call you,' says his master. He lies down again; and again a voice cries 'Samuel!' A second time he deems it to be only human; a second time he is told there has been no human call. Once more he seeks his rest, and once more the voice cries 'Samuel!' Even then he believes it to be human; even then he deems it a summons from earthly lips. The voice of God has assumed the accents of a man.

Now, in this feature of the Portrait the artist has recorded not an abnormal, but a universal symptom of the religious life. Our deepest impressions of spiritual things come to us indirectly. It is not by a voice from

*heaven* that a man believes himself to be in the presence of God; it is by the blending of *earthly* voices. When two or three circumstances, distinctively different in origin and emanating from different points of the compass, appear to converge towards one definite result, we are constrained to say, 'This is the will of God.' How does a man get inspired with the belief that God has a mission for him? By imagining he hears voices from the sky? Very rarely has it been *thus*. In the large majority of cases the sense of a Divine mission has come from observing how independent events have conspired in place and time to further an individual destiny. An Egyptian princess happens to be passing when a child is floating on the Nile river; that child in after years will probably feel that his life was preserved for *something*. A band of Ishmaelites is on its journey at the very spot and hour in which a boy is about to experience violence; that boy in the days to come will claim a special destiny. A ram is caught by the horns in a thicket at the very moment when a man is debating within himself what would be the most suitable burnt offering; that ram

will assuredly be accepted as the object of sacrifice preferred by heaven.

There is a remarkable passage in the Jewish Scriptures, 'Ye shall hear a voice *behind* you, saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it!" ' I believe that to the Jew the voice of God *ever* came from behind—from the region of past experience. He followed because he felt he had been already led—led by a stream of tendencies over which he had no control, and whose united currents had been produced by a connection he could not understand. He heard the Divine because he had first heard the human. The voice of God came to him as the voice of Eli—as the voice of *earthly* influences. It was in looking back that he saw their sacred character. It was in *retrospect* that he recognised the presence of the Spirit of God beneath those seemingly mechanical movements which had shaped his worldly way.

But there is a second feature in this call of Samuel which is worthy of our attention. From the moment in which he recognised the real origin of the message, he perceived it to be something which would disturb the calm of his life. It brought not peace, but a sword.

What *was* this message which young Samuel received? It was the command to denounce the wickedness of the house of Eli. I do not suppose that he then heard of this wickedness for the first time; doubtless there had already rung in his ears many human complaints. But now for the first time it was borne in upon him that these human complaints were the voice of *God*. His conscience told him that, if he were a true minister at the Divine altar, it was incumbent on him to bring before the High Priest Eli the iniquity of his own family. When conscience spoke, Samuel resolved to obey; but consider what that resolve meant to him! To obey it, was to endanger all his worldly interests. It was likely to procure his dismissal from the service of the High Priest; and to be dismissed from the service of a High Priest would be, in the opinion of the Jewish race, to contract an indelible stain. The choice before Samuel was the choice between the rose and the thistle. On the one side was comfort for the present and an open door for the future; on the other there was a probable expulsion into the cold world and a shutting of all the gates which led to promotion.

Now, although the case of Samuel is an accentuated one, the call of duty is nearly always a call to struggle. The very idea of duty implies retraint or *con*straint. Duty is the middle term between compulsion and love; it is halfway between Egypt and Canaan; it is the desert. Outward force has passed, but spontaneity has not yet come. I move voluntarily; but I move with a burden, and I move slowly. I have met my angel, but I *struggle* with my angel; I have seen God face to face, but I halt upon my thigh. Our moments of duty are never unconscious moments, never light-hearted moments. They have always a sense of pressure, always an obstruction at the door. The life of Samuel is, from the dawn, a life of sacrifice. The path on which his childhood went forth was a path of thorns; and he took it knowing it to be so. All who have followed his steps have had to tread the same narrow way. In all ages Herod has sought the young child to kill it. The Divine life has always run counter to a worldly principle, and has required to make its way in conflict with that principle. The road of individual pleasure is not parallel with the road

of virtue. They will diverge with you as they diverged with Samuel—at the very point where duty calls. The hour of his spiritual promotion was precisely that hour which presaged his material degradation. The experience of the first prophet will be the experience of all Christian seers.

I have confined myself to the opening of Samuel's life, because it is in the opening of his life that he is universally representative. He was to live long, to do much, to suffer many things. He was to purify public worship, to root out idolatry, to judge the tribes of Israel, to humble the pride of the Philistine, to be the maker and the unmaker of kings. The sense of his presence in the nation was to be so vivid that it was to outlast even his life, for, after he had passed away, men were to believe in the apparition of his spectre. But these things belong to the annals of Judaism, not to the annals of humanity. What belongs to humanity is the fact that the spirit of prophecy came to him through the spirit of a little child. This is the one abiding element in the life of Samuel. It is the one element which is not connected with Shiloh, with Ramah, with Gilgal, with any local

haunt whatever, but which is found in every place and at every time. The name of Samuel is traditionally associated with the establishing of the prophetic school; and his spirit of prophecy came to him in *childhood*. That is the fact of permanent interest in this delineation of the Great Gallery; for it is still through the intuitions of the child-life that Man sees the kingdom of God.

There were three great functions in the Jewish nation whose simultaneous existence was contemporary with the life of Samuel—the Prophet, the Priest, and the King. I believe these three represent the three periods in the conception of time—yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. The Priest is the representative of the past. He exists as a salve to the pains of memory—the memory of sins committed in days of old; his sacrifices are efforts to wash these away. The King represents the present. He exists to guide the hand at the actual hour, to give the law which shall regulate the immediate course of action. But the Prophet is the representative of the future. He exists to tell, not merely of forthcoming events, but of eternal principles. It is his mis-

sion to reveal the issues of right and wrong —to proclaim how, by an inevitable law, the one will bring joy and the other pain. And therefore it is that the organ of the prophetic life is ever the spirit of the child. Childhood is the time that looks forward. Old age habitually looks *back;* it is the time for memory. Manhood generally looks *round;* it is the time for observation. But childhood looks forward; it is the time for hope. Judaism provided for all three; she comforted the soul on every side. Her Priest comforted the memory; he suggested an expiation of the past. Her King gave strength for present weakness; he surrounded her with defensive bulwarks. Her Prophet pointed her on to a bright morning, to a day when the harvest sown in tears should be reaped with joy, and when the desert should be glad and blossom as the rose. The nation equipped with these is equipped indeed.

My FATHER, prepare a place for the child life that lingers in my heart! Prepare a place for that instinct which points toward to-morrow! Thou hast prepared a place for my yesterday—Thou hast cancelled the dark deeds of my past. Thou hast prepared a place for

to-day—Thou hast promised strength for the hour. But I have a need beyond my yesterday, beyond to-day; I have a yearning for to-morrow. Shall this be the only part of my soul for which there is no environment! Thou hast provided for memory—Thou hast suffered my heart to see its past glorified. Thou hast provided for the vision of to-day—Thou hast sent the energy with the emergency and the refuge with the storm. But is there to be no provision for hope, O my Father! Thou hast a voice to greet my ear when I turn *backward;* Thou hast a voice to greet my ear when I turn *round;* hast Thou no voice to greet my ear when I look forward. Shall the door of my future be the only *unopened* door! Why, then, hast Thou taught me to *knock* there! When I knock at the door of memory, I am answered; I can undo much that tarnished my yesterday. When I knock at the door of to-day, I am answered; I can help to move the wheel that moves the world. But when I knock at the door of to-morrow, shall there be no answer but the delusive echo of my heart! Shall hope be a blind-alley—the one blind-alley of the universe! Shall aspiration

be winged—for no atmosphere! Shall faith be fledged—for no flight! Shall foresight be given—for no future! Shall there be longings on the sea—when there never was land! Shall there be a sense of prophecy—when there has been no word of promise! It *cannot* be, O my Father!

## CHAPTER II

### DAVID THE MANY-SIDED

It is very rarely that a nation has associated all her attributes with the life of a single man. I say 'rarely' to avoid the possibility of exaggeration; but I do not myself know one instance of a purely national gallery having done so. The pride of a country has generally been to have a *diversified* gallery—to divide her great professions among different men. Britain places her Shakespeare in a unique position of glory; but she would not seek to claim for him a union of *all* the professions. She is content to behold his genius in his special sphere—the sphere of the poet. She does not insist on recognising in him a concentration of all departments—the science of a Newton, the logic of a Bacon, the statesmanship of a Chatham, the military skill of a Marlborough. She is proud to think that in enumerating her different sources of glory she can assign each of them to a separate name.

But in that one Gallery which is not national we meet with the spectacle which is elsewhere absent. We find a people, through long centuries of its history and through devious changes of its fortune, consistently and persistently agreeing to heap upon a single individual the aggregate glories of every profession in life. Israel has fixed her affections upon an ideal whose very name expresses the object uniting all desires—David—the beloved. To claim one man as the object of all national desires is a claim not easily sustained. It can only be supported on the supposition that this one man has passed through every national experience, has filled every sphere, has partaken of every circumstance. Accordingly, the David of Israel is not simply the greatest of her *kings;* he is the man great in everything. He monopolises all her institutions. He is her shepherd boy—the representative of her *toiling* classes. He is her musician—the successor of Jubal and Miriam and Deborah. He is her soldier—the conqueror of all the Goliaths that would steal her peace. He is her knight-errant—bringing *mercy* into war. He is her king—numbering her armies and regulating her polity. He is her priest—

substituting a broken and contrite spirit for the blood of bulls and rams. He is her prophet —presaging with his latest breath the everlastingness of his kingdom. He is her poet—all her psalms are called by his name. The truth is, in the estimation of Israel this man is a personification of the nation itself—the embodiment of her qualities, the incarnation of her spirit, the type of her destiny. A conception so unique deserves consideration. How can we better photograph the form of David than by presenting the analogy between the picture of his life and the life of ancient Israel —that Israel which saw in him a mirror of her own soul!

Even the *history* of Israel seems to repeat itself in David. What do we see at the outset of his life? A shepherd boy with a very unlikely prospect of success and a very big presentiment of glory! Like the nation, he was born to a pastoral life; he fed his father's sheep on the plains of Bethlehem. Like the nation, he was deemed, in his morning, very insignificant. He had seven brothers—strong, stalwart, gigantic men. *These* were pointed to as the men who would serve their country. Little David was, like little Israel, a pigmy

among the giants; and the world said, 'He will never equal his brothers!' Yet little David had within that soul of his an ambition, compared to which that of his brothers was a molehill. He, like his tiny country, had a dream of empire—that dream which had its beginning when Abraham heard his mission under the Chaldean stars. He, like Abraham, had received a prophetic voice, had felt the touch of an anointing hand. Ever, amid the bleating of the sheep, there had sounded in his ear a deep refrain, 'You will be king of Israel! you will be king of Israel!' He kept the dream in his heart, he told it not; but all the warmer did it burn because it could not be spoken. And though it could not be spoken, it could be sung; it made songs without words. It tuned the strings of his harp; it accompanied his music; it imparted to his notes a wild dash and daring which made them seem to strike the stars. He was unconscious of their power; he played spontaneously—played to relieve himself. But just on that account he was overheard; unconscious genius ever *is* overheard. Men stood and listened in the night to the great musician. They spread his fame.

They told how a nightingale had come. They spoke of a harp with chords inspired.

And by and by the tidings reached the most august ear in all the land. They came to the royal palace; they were heard by Saul the king. Saul was passing through an hour of mental darkness. There had come to him, as there comes to many of us, an unaccountable unrest. We are told of a peace that 'passeth understanding'; there is also a *dis*peace that 'passeth understanding.' There are clouds in the mind which are not explained by clouds in the sky, for they often come in our days of outward sunshine. Saul had such an experience. He was afflicted from within—afflicted in the midst of his exaltation, on the pinnacle of that proud height to which fortune had raised him. *Material* conditions had not caused the malady; material conditions could not remove the malady. Might not *im*material conditions be tried! If the disorder originated from within, might it not be conquered from within! Might not *music* have power to minister to a mind diseased! Why not call in the aid of this wonderful player whose powers of melody were bruited everywhere! Why not send for David!



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David is sent for, and comes; and, as he comes, the Gallery repeats in him another of its past stages. He has already heard the call of *Abraham;* he is about to experience the call of Isaac. The call of Abraham was the summoning to a life of glory; the call of Isaac was the summoning to a life of domestic ministration. When David entered the house of Saul he abandoned, for the time, his *dream.* He laid aside his desire to rule; he tried to serve, to dig wells of comfort for the heart of another. And not without success. As he played, the malady of Saul subsided; the clouds parted, and a stream of sunshine burst upon his soul. If a pupil in a Sunday-school were asked, 'Who was the first man influenced by the Psalms of David?' he would not go very far wrong if he answered, 'Saul.' It is true, these melodies were songs without words; but they were not songs without thoughts. On the poor wandering soul of the monarch they had all the effect of a sweet and solemn prayer; they said, 'Peace! Be still!' They were the *earliest* psalms of David—psalms of *unspoken* words, psalms of *undefined* comfort, psalms whose Divine message came only in music. When the critics have

disposed of all the rest, they will leave to the minstrel these *first* chords.

And now the scene changes once more, and there is repeated another past phase of the Hebrew Gallery. The experience of David has echoed the call of Abraham and the domestic ministration of Isaac; it is now to echo the troubles of Joseph. He has had the dream of empire; he has had the stage of domestic life; he is now to have the experience of private jealousies—jealousies of which, like Joseph, he is to be, not the sharer, but the victim. There is a passion which music cannot quell, which culture cannot calm, which art cannot allay; it is envy. In the court of Israel the personality of the young minstrel is magnetic; he draws all eyes, he wins all hearts. Men begin to contrast his face of morning brightness with the dark and lowering countenance of their monarch. Saul awakes from his nervous derangement and looks round. He sees the situation at a glance. He is losing ground; he is being superseded in the affections of his people—superseded by a stripling! He must *remove* this centre of magnetism from the eyes of men. What is he to do! How is he to get rid of him! By open violence? No;

that would be unpopular. He will follow the method of Joseph's brethren; he will cause him to disappear by seeming accident. He will make him captain of a thousand men; he will send him into the front of battle, into positions where death will be almost inevitable. By means that will waken no suspicion he will remove this shepherd boy.

But the means are all in vain. David at the head of the thousand is only more magnetic still. He performs deeds of prowess and becomes the right hand of Israel. What is to be done with this troublesome prodigy! A new device presents itself to the mind of Saul—so at least I read the narrative.[1] He will simulate a return of his malady. He will pretend to be *again* mad; and in this seeming madness he will give David his deathblow. Again the project fails; the musician eludes the javelin. Did the penetrating eye of David see through the subterfuge? I think it did. Be this as it may, the mask is now withdrawn. The baffled monarch turns at bay. He has failed in strategy; he will take means direct, to rid himself of this rival. David is warned—warned from

[1] I think the incident recorded in I Samuel xviii. 11 a misplaced anticipation of that recorded in I Samuel xix. 10.

within the palace, warned by Saul's own son. There is but one refuge—flight. David disappears from court. He wanders a while in the secluded parts of Israel. But no part of Israel is secluded enough to screen him from the eye of Saul. He must fly farther. He must leave his country altogether. He must become a stranger in a strange land. *Again* the national history repeats itself in David. He, like his country, becomes an exile, and wanders in a land of Egypt. He treads a foreign soil; he is a fugitive and an outcast; he is indebted to the charity of others. He is oppressed and weary, now on the mountain, now in the vale —to-day skirting a ravine, to-morrow lurking in a cave—sometimes alone in the wilderness, sometimes within touch of his adversary. At one moment he is seen in Philistia; at another he treads the mountains of Engedi; at a third he is by the waters of the Dead Sea. The sea of his own life is dead; he has hung his harp on the willows; he has resolved to sing no more.

Then the curtain rises anew, and the life of David *continues* to repeat the history of Israel. After the exile comes the exodus; after the land of bondage comes the conquest of Canaan.

David's life has hitherto been itself a harp of many strings. Each chord has renewed the existence of some bygone age of the national annals. He has begun with the shepherd life of Abel. He has received the anointing mission of Abraham. He has served at the domestic hearth with Isaac. He has experienced the envy that assailed the life of Joseph. He has passed into that exile where dawned the day of Moses. He is now to emerge into that struggle which secured the land to Joshua, and to repeat in his own life the transition from exile into empire.

Nor is there wanting a point of resemblance between the *conquest* by Joshua and the conquest by David. In both cases there is an absence of personal glory. I have shown this in the case of Joshua; it is even more marked in the case of David. It is not really David's prowess that wins him the kingdom; it is the trend of circumstances—or, as men would then have called it, the hand of the Lord. The battle which shattered the fortunes of Saul was not fought by David—was not fought even in the interest of David. It was the *Philistines* that made room for David in Israel—made room without meaning to do so. It was

on the field of Gilboa that the pride of Saul was extinguished—a field on which Israel and Philistia fought for their own ends. That battle almost annihilated the house of Saul. He perished; three of his sons perished; the flower of his army perished. Israel was in the position of England after the Wars of the Roses. She had lost 'the last of the barons'—the last of the great leaders on whom Saul's house could depend. Any strong hand would be sure to hold the reins in a nation so struck with panic. Yet, even in this panic-struck nation, the strong hand of David did not at once become supreme. There was a lingering loyalty to the house of Saul. Eleven of the tribes clung to his memory and enthroned his son. One tribe alone declared for David—the tribe of Judah. For seven years there were *two* kings in Israel—each claiming undivided empire. For seven years there was internecine war between David and the remnant of Saul's house; and, though the balance of success inclined to David, his final triumph came not from his sword. It came from an act of desertion on the part of an enemy, from the abandonment of the house of Saul by one of its leading supporters. On the whole, I am dis-

posed to think that David realised his mission mainly by the grace of God; or, if you prefer its rationalistic equivalent, mainly by the stream of tendencies which converged, in place and time, so as to *effect* the issue. His stage of climax was the stage of *Joshua*. The walls of his Jericho happened to fall precisely at the moment when he happened to blow the trumpet. He was little more than a *spectator* of the scene which crowned him. His merit was in waiting for the tide and taking the tide. He was never more humble than on his road to the throne.

I have thus sought to institute a parallel between the history of David and the history of the Jewish race. The evolutionist tells us that in the stages of birth the human individual passes through the phases of the ascending animal series from the fish to the mammal. I think the individuality of David repeated the history of its *human* ancestors—incarnated within itself the previous life of the nation. But it is not only David's *history* that reveals the collective life of Israel; his character does so too. There is not in all biography a more remarkable delineation than the character of David. We have pictures of strikingly *good*

men; we have pictures of singularly bad men; we have pictures of men who are half good and half bad. None of these designations will cover David. Measured by a Christian standard, he is no saint. Measured by a heathen standard, he is no sinner. Measured by *any* standard, he is no mixture—he never exhibits a *blending* of good and bad. How, then, shall we describe him? If he is not a telescope of uniform sublimities, nor a microscope of uniform littlenesses, nor yet a union of telescope and microscope in which one eye can see the sublime and the other the small, what is he? He is a kaleidoscope. He reveals a series of seemingly disconnected scenes of which the later often reverses the picture given by the earlier. In each scene appears, not a *phase* of the man, not a quality of the man, but the whole man. Yet the David of to-day is often a direct contrast to the David of yesterday; but for his face and form we should not recognise him. Yesterday, he had one pure spiritual friendship—the devotion to Jonathan; to-day, he has many sensuous loves. Yesterday, he was modest and retiring; to-day, through vanity, he vaunts the number of his fighting men. Yesterday, he was open and confiding; to-day,

he deceives his benefactor Achish. Yesterday, he was chivalrous to his enemies; to-day—if the passage be genuine—he denies forgiveness to his greatest general. Yesterday, he saved the life of Saul, his foe; to-day, he *takes* the life of Uriah, his friend. How came such a character to exist? Is there any connection in its acts beyond what is effected by the shaking of life's kaleidoscope? Can we account for a phenomenon seemingly so grotesque and really so contradictory?

I think we can. I believe this man epitomised not only the past history, but the past passions, of Israel. I believe the two streams of heredity which had run in separate channels through the path of the nation met at last in a single life—the life of David. If I were to christen these two streams, I should call them 'The Lion' and 'The Lamb.' Look back over the history of the Hebrew race, you will find the moral life of that race ever depicted as a strife between two. Go where you will, you are ever confronted by a pair. Every lamb has its opposing lion. Abel has his Cain; Abraham has his Lot; Isaac has his Ishmael; Jacob has his Esau; Joseph has his 'Brethren'; Moses has his Amalek; Joshua has his Achan.

In David the two pass into one. He becomes the heir to a double heredity. The strings of his life-harp are swept by two impulses—a south wind and a north—the one bringing music, the other discord. When you see him proceeding from the altar of God to a life of sensuality, it is not correct to say that he has had a fall from grace. If you walk through a town and at certain parts come to vacant spaces, will this prove that the city is losing its inhabitants? It will prove the reverse. These vacant spaces are the survivals of yesterday. They suggest that yesterday there were no buildings at all—that the present amount of population has been planted on spots which were originally in the same condition. So is it with the bad deeds of David. They are survivals of an old time—not falls from new grace. Not all at once could the city of God be built within him. Not all at once could the barren swamps be filled with homes and hearths of culture. Not all at once could the wild beasts of the forest be rooted out and the voice of Man be made to echo through the waste places. Not all at once could the forms of the past that lived within him die—the violent Cain, the wild Ishmael, the selfish Lot,

the reckless Esau, the deceitful brethren of Joseph. These remained as the memories of yesterday; they waited the expansion of the city to clear them away.

Here, then, was a region in which David was *not* king—the region of the heart. I mean, his *own* heart. He had a power of captivating the heart of others; but he never took captive his own. All the winds of the past strove for the mastery of that great sea. Each prevailed in turn. Sometimes it was swept by the gust of anger, sometimes by the blast of impurity, sometimes by the storm of doubt, sometimes by the breeze of generous sympathy. At morning it caught the glow, at noon the glare, at evening the gloom. It was the heart of a child; the impression of the moment ruled it. David *felt* the weakness, and cried out for a king over *himself*. He called aloud for some one mighty enough to still the tempest of his heart. This is the deepest note of his whole biography—his distrust of himself, of his own power, of his own judgment. I do not wonder the hymns of Israel are called the psalms of David; they reflect him, they mirror him—mirror most of all his distrust of himself. When they cry 'I have made the Most High

my Refuge!'—when they exclaim, 'O God my Shield, look on the face of Thine anointed!'—when they pray, 'Hide me in the secret of Thy pavilion!' do we not hear the refrain of that life which could find no help but in God! There is not in the whole Gallery the picture of a soul so conscious of its weakness. David will do nothing without God. He will neither lead an army nor build a temple without the preliminary Voice. He has no confidence in his own will. *Saul* had confidence in his own will. He was a weaker man all round; but he rarely felt the need of the Lord. David has in his veins the strength of two conflicting streams of heredity; yet his deepest sense is that of his own nothingness. His name has become almost a synonym for the conviction of personal sin.

And do you not see that David's sense of moral impotence has originated precisely in the strength of the contending elements within him. Had there been only one element—whether good or bad—he would never have felt that impotence. Had he been simply an amiable passionless creature untempted by violent impulses and unassailed by the glitter of vice, he might have done less harm to his

*generation*, but he would never have cultivated his special flower—the thirst for God. Why is this man ever longing in a dry parched land where no water is? Precisely because his was *not* an untempted nature. He wanted to be good, but he could not. He had too big an inheritance of past corruption to believe in his own strength. His thirst for God came from his personal experience of the meagreness of his own soul. A placid nature would never have felt the impotence and would never have known the thirst; he would have failed to cultivate David's special flower. David stands in the Gallery with a unique message—that the forces of the natural world are not sufficient to make a man good. It is the message commonly called evangelical. The man who preaches it from his heart must ever be one who has come fresh from the storm. He who knows not the power of passion, who feels not the seductions of sense, who never sails except on summer seas, may say indeed, 'Give us our daily bread,' but will find little need to say, 'Deliver us from evil.' If David is to cultivate the flower whose 'language' is that prayer, he will have to hear the roar of the breakers and experience the crash of the timbers and learn

what it is to utter the piercing cry, 'Save us; we perish!' That was the education adapted to him; that was the education he received. To the city of his habitation he was led by a rough way, because the rough way was for him the only right way; his mission was to proclaim the heart's need of God.

My heart needs Thee, O Lord, my heart needs Thee! *No* part of my being needs Thee like my heart. All else within me can be filled by Thy *gifts*. My hunger can be satisfied by daily bread. My thirst can be allayed by earthly waters. My cold can be removed by household fires. My weariness can be relieved by outward rest. But no outward thing can make my *heart* pure. The calmest day will not calm my passions. The fairest scene will not beautify my soul. The richest music will not make harmony within. The breezes can cleanse the air; but no breeze ever cleansed a spirit. This world has not provided for my *heart*. It has provided for my eye; it has provided for my ear; it has provided for my touch; it has provided for my taste; it has provided for my sense of beauty—but it has not provided

for my heart. Provide *Thou* for my heart, O Lord! It is the only unwinged bird in all creation; give it wings, O Lord! Earth has *failed* to give it wings; its very power of loving has often dragged it in the mire. Be *Thou* the strength of my heart! Be Thou its fortress in temptation, its shield in remorse, its covert in the storm, its star in the night, its voice in the solitude! Guide it in its gloom; help it in its heat; direct it in its doubt; calm it in its conflict; fan it in its faintness; prompt it in its perplexity; lead it through its labyrinths; raise it from its ruins! *I* cannot rule this heart of mine; keep it under the shadow of Thine own wings!

## CHAPTER III

### SOLOMON THE WISE

In standing before the Picture of Solomon, I am conscious of an impression which I have not hitherto experienced—an absence of the dramatic element. All the previous figures have stood in critical situations. Adam in the garden, Abel in the field, Noah in the presence of the Divine Judgment, Abraham in his arduous mission, Isaac in his life of domestic sacrifice, Joseph in his dungeon, Moses in his desert, Joshua in his wars, Samuel in his call to imperil his worldly prospects, David in his exile from home and country—all have exhibited the spectacle of difficulty and danger. In Solomon we have a life where the difficulty and danger are *not* exhibited. They are there; but they are unseen. What we do see, in the foreground, is an event which will be found to pertain to the life of every young man in the world—the choice of a profession. Solomon is asked, as many boys and all youths are asked,

what he would like to be. He was already a king; but one may be a king in many ways. Solomon is asked what gift he would chiefly prize as a sign of real greatness. There is spread before his fancy what is spread before the fancy of all romantic young men—a choice of golden possibilities. Would he be rich? Would he be powerful? Would he be famous? Would he be an object of admiration? Would he be a wise man, a man of prudence and sagacity? Solomon says, 'Let me be wise!'

This *seems* a very commonplace introduction to a great life. But is it? It is undramatic, no doubt; it is homespun. But what if the crisis of national history has shifted from the theatre to the home! What if in the transition from David to Solomon the drama of human life has *itself* assumed an undramatic garb! What if the possibility of tragic issues has begun to lie, not in war of nations, not in rise of dynasties, not in political combinations, but just at the fireside and around the family hearth! Would not this alter our view of the commonplaceness! Would it not lead us to reconsider our estimate of the Gallery's introduction to the life of Solomon—to ask if, after

all, there may not be something in this narrative as rich in possible tragedy as was the threatening of a deluge, or the resistance to an Egyptian bondage!

Now, I am prepared to show that it *was* so, that Solomon's choice of a profession was really one of the most tragic acts of Jewish annals—an act on whose decision was suspended an issue as momentous as ever hung on the prayers of Moses or on the sword of Joshua. Did you ever ask yourself what is the reason that the decision made by Solomon is so highly commended? To me the answer seems clear. His decision is applauded, not mainly because it was a proof of personal character, but because it furnished the hope of escape from a national danger. If Solomon had set his heart either upon riches or upon military glory, there would have been no guarantee that the silent mine beneath his feet would not explode. For, there *was* a mine beneath his feet. Peaceful as looked the scene, calm as were the surroundings, there were subterranean fires which one thoughtless deed might bring to the surface. There was, below the crust of the soil, an underground heat which any moment might be fanned into flame

by a giddy head or an unsteady hand. The only security from the warmth below was to have absolute coolness above. A hot-headed sovereign, a man on the throne animated by personal motives, would be certain at some point to fire the train. There was wanted on the seat of royalty a balanced mind, an impersonal mind, a mind in whom all private ambitions were subordinated to zeal for the common good. Let us consider this necessity a little more in detail.

I said that when David came into the undivided possession of the empire, Israel was very much in the position of England after the Wars of the Roses. There had been a slaughter among the great leaders. The land was like a steed that had lost his rider; it was moving aimlessly, it was directed nowhere. David obtained the supremacy without a rival, and he transmitted the kingdom to his son. But you will commit a great mistake if you imagine that the party of Saul was crushed because his house was crushed. I hold very strongly that the eleven tribes who followed Saul never submitted to David in their *hearts*. Poor Rehoboam gets the credit of having split the kingdom into two; I do not believe it was

ever really one. It was never anything more than a patched garment. Judah and Benjamin were never truly united. Their union was like the assembling together of an audience to hear a great preacher. David was the preacher. The audience had no bond of brotherhood—not even the acceptance of the preacher's doctrine. They were kept together simply by the spell of a presence, by the power of a personality, by the commanding chords of a human voice. It was a frail and impotent thread on which to suspend a kingdom!

For now the voice of the preacher is still! His presence has been withdrawn; another stands in the place he used to occupy. David is dead, and a man of different mould has mounted the rostrum. Will Solomon sway the masses as David did? By natural gifts, no. The new preacher has not the elements of the old. In every respect they are contrasts. David was extemporaneous; Solomon is elaborately prepared. David spoke in outbursts; Solomon deals in rounded periods. David was unconventional; Solomon is steeped in culture. David appealed to human experience; Solomon expounds abstract principles. David revealed the man; Solomon exhibits the scholar.

David *was* the sermon; Solomon *gives* the sermon. Clearly, if each is to be judged by his natural powers, the second cannot keep together the audience of the first.

To drop the metaphor, young Solomon had a problem before him. He had to ask himself the question, How shall I keep this already disunited mass from *showing* its disunion? It was clear to him that to effect this he needed a very special gift—a gift quite distinct from the power of making money, or the brilliancy that wins fame. I think, indeed, that the task before Solomon was the greatest that can be imposed on any king, and that the man who performs it deserves to be reckoned amongst the greatest of all sovereigns. We are generally in a mistake on this matter. We are under the impression that to be a king in times of open revolution is a more arduous thing than to be a king in times of unexpressed dissatisfaction. It is the reverse. In times of open revolution a sovereign requires but one power —an adequate army. But when the currents are underground, when the factions are invisible, inaudible, undefinable, when the ferment of discontent is working below the surface and the subterranean heat is making no

sign, he who guides the state must have the powers of a prophet. He must have the gift of imagination, the gift of insight, the gift of anticipative sympathy, above all, that gift which defies definition—the thing called tact. The man who can preserve tranquillity among elements of inward discord is every inch a king.

Now, remember that for nearly forty years this was what Solomon did. His is characteristically the reign of peace; there is not such a period of protracted peace in all the Jewish annals. This in itself would not be a matter of greatness; there is a calm which comes from lethargy—from the *absence* of vital force. But the peace of Solomon's reign is the peace of a river; it is calm, not through stagnation, but through balanced movement. It is a peace produced in the midst of natural anarchy, in a sphere where elements tend to stand apart from one another. It is a result achieved, not by the *suspension* of regal force, but by the prolonged operation of that force. The spectacle afforded to the eye is one of power—of greater power than could be evinced by any military conquest. The military conquest requires an effort suited to the emergency; the preservation of tranquillity

amid turmoil needs an energy uniform at all times.

Were I to put the question, Was Queen Elizabeth or Charles I. the greater sovereign? there is not a schoolboy who would not answer, 'Queen Elizabeth.' But why do we hold that the earlier is more worthy of praise than the later ruler? Is it because Elizabeth was fortunate and Charles was not? No; our judgment would be quite the same if Charles had won the field of Naseby and levelled his enemies with the dust. The merit of Elizabeth lies in the fact that under her the Revolution never *took place*. She had elements of discord in her kingdom as fierce as any which marked the reign of Charles; but Charles let them explode, Elizabeth kept them quiet. We pronounce Elizabeth the greater potentate because her power went deeper down than the power of Charles would have gone even had it been victorious; it could retain an empire in tranquillity when everything conspired to make a conflagration.

Now, I have always felt that there is a strong historical parallel between the Portrait of King Solomon and the Portrait of Queen Elizabeth. I do not know of any two

characters living at so wide a distance from each other in space and time who present such a remarkable analogy in their public lives. Both had a very remote prospect of reaching the thrones which they eventually secured. Both attained their position through storm and stress. Both came to a kingdom in which the democracy had been elevated to power through the fall of great families. Both ruled over a state thick-sown with secret dissensions —a state where hostile parties nursed their unspoken jealousies. Both for almost an equal period kept down public disquiet without any display of authority and without any exercise of severity. I am tempted to add one parallel more. Both almost at the last heard the beginnings of a long-suppressed storm—a storm which their successors were to hear with appalling clearness; and the one reign, like the other, had an evening bereft of gold. The marvel in each case is, not that the evening should have been dim, but that the hours of the day should have continued so long bright. Nothing could be a stronger testimony to the greatness of either sovereign.

Turning now exclusively to Solomon, let us observe the means adopted by him which, in

securing this internal tranquillity, succeeded so long and so well. And, first of all, I wish to direct attention to the fact that his whole life is built upon a plan. We are, in my opinion, under a widespread misapprehension as to the character of Solomon. The popular view is that he is the delineation of a double personality—a life divided between wisdom and folly. We picture a man alternating between the cares of state and the pleasures of the sensualist. We figure him as swayed by two opposite impulses—the proclivities of the statesman and the tendencies of the man of idleness; and we are disposed to regard the latter as the reaction from the former. Now, this is not the view I take of the life of Solomon. To me he presents the picture of one man. Every incident of his life is to my mind the expression of one and the same tendency. I do not think he ever deviates from his political purpose, nor ever forgets it for a moment. That he went far astray in his pleasures, that he was not always loyal to his religion, that he was unduly prodigal in his expenditure, I freely admit. But his errors were political errors. They were not moments of reaction from state cares; they were themselves part of

his state policy. That they were mistakes, no one will deny; but they were mistakes of the king rather than of the man. They were committed in the *pursuance* of his plan of statecraft, not in the forgetfulness of it. That plan of statecraft never varied in its aim—to keep dormant that faction of the kingdom which still, with pertinacious loyalty, clung to the memory of the house of Saul.

How was this to be done? One or other of two methods was available—the awakening of a common danger or the suggestion of a common interest. The former has been the *usual* method of kings in the circumstances of Solomon; they have sought to purchase domestic peace by the incurring of foreign war. A nation divided by factions has often been driven into unity by the call to arm against another nation. It was so with the France of 1792; it was so with the Germany of 1870. Many a despot has found outside war conducive to his indoor peace and has not scrupled to strike the match of international discord. A foreign irritant has often produced a home sedative, and the producing of a sedative by this means has often been a policy. It was the successful policy of Napoleon the Great; it was the at-

tempted policy of Napoleon the Little. But it was not the policy of King Solomon. He felt that to cure strife on the homeopathic principle was but a poor salvation—that to heal domestic discord by outdoor discord was but a superficial gain. He wanted peace all round —peace not only in the inner parts, but on the borders and at the gates. Accordingly, he chose another way—what seemed to him a more excellent way. Rejecting the aid of a common *danger,* he turned for support to a common interest. It seemed to him that he could best bind the heart of Judah to the heart of Benjamin, that he could best reconcile his own tribe with the refractory eleven tribes, by presenting to them a positive rather than a negative ground for union. It was for this that he strove through all the years. His whole reign was an application of his principle. Sometimes he chose right *measures,* sometimes wrong; but with the principle itself he was never inconsistent. There is no side of his character which does not, to my mind, bear the stamp of this peacemaking design.

Take the domestic side. Here he is decidedly reprehensible. The vast number of matrimonial alliances which he personally

and simultaneously contracted are a disgrace to family life; and even for an Eastern monarch, they place him in a low moral category. Yet I do not believe that their dominant motive was sensuality. I think his design was that the family of David should ramify in as many directions as possible at home and abroad. He felt that a common interest is greatly promoted by a common blood. He felt that nothing would weaken the memory of the house of Saul like consanguinity to the house of David. The more branches the Davidic tree could shoot forth in the land of Canaan and the adjacent lands, the more would it be endeared to Semitic eyes. This, I believe, was the motive, the main motive, which lighted the myriad nuptial torches of Solomon. His marriages, regular and irregular, had a political aim. They were meant to graft his blood upon the Hebrew race, to connect that race for the future with his name and lineage, and to elicit the verdict of the generation yet unborn, 'The whole land of Israel has a stone in the house of David.'

Take the commercial side. Here at first sight Solomon appears to be the typical money-maker, living exclusively for the

wealth he can gather. He seems to have deserted the choice of wisdom for the choice of gold. His ships travel the seas in search of merchandise; they touch at every port where the spirit of commerce dwells. His caravans range the land in the service of the trader; they go forth with native produce and return with foreign treasure. His commercial enterprise extends to all regions. It visits Tyre. It reaches Arabia. It treats with Egypt. It has intercourse with Babylon. It probably touches the shores of India. To outward appearance, the whole aim of his life and of his labours is the amassing of wealth, the acquisition of personal gain. But look deeper, and you will form another view. You will come to the conclusion that, to his mind, the value lay in the pursuing, not in the thing pursued. You will come to see that this itself had for him a political value. The aim of Solomon, as I take it, was to keep the mind of the nation in united employment. Civil war would keep men in *dis*-united employment. But the battle of human industries was a battle which his people might all fight side by side. Commercial enterprise loomed before the eye of Solomon, not so much in the light of a personal gain as in the

light of a popular attraction. Here was an object on which the admirers of the house of Saul and the adherents of the house of David might unite! Here was a cause in which they might work together! Here was at once a labour and a pleasure in whose pursuit each might forget its wrongs and become the ally of the other! And when the result of this commercial prosperity should appear, when the opulence of the nation should be manifested in its magnificent pageants and its splendid buildings, here was a source of common pride to Judah and Benjamin, a work whose triumph both could claim and whose glory each could share!

But it is on the religious side that the wisdom of Solomon is most resplendent. I do not, of course, speak of those concessions to idolatry which tarnish his later years. I believe these to have been mistaken attempts at conciliation—things in which the wisdom of Solomon failed. But that which exhibits the true religious sagacity of this man is the deed which is indissolubly associated with his name —the building of the temple. Why did he build that temple? I think in losing sight of the man's character we have missed the full

significance of the deed. What was his motive for the erection of that stately pile? To fulfil a wish of his father? Partly. To satisfy a personal impulse of devotion? Partly. But I think neither of these standing alone nor both united would have impelled Solomon to such a work. Remember that this man was before all things a politician. David would have built the temple for 'glory to God in the highest'; Solomon required the additional motive, 'Peace on earth; goodwill among men.' What Solomon wanted above all things was a bond of national unity. Two rival ideals were dividing his empire—the house of David and the house of Saul. To the heart of Solomon there came the suggestion of a third and higher watchword —the house of God. Might not the two other houses be united in this *wider* building! Might not the memory of the long feud be made to perish in the common effort to inaugurate another kingdom, in the co-operation of both parties for the construction of a new and glorious palace—a palace compared to which the residence of a Saul and of a David would alike grow dim—a dwelling for the habitation of the King of Kings!

Can you fail to see how in the building of

this temple the idea of common co-operation occupies so prominent a place! Why are so many invited to contribute gifts? Why are such numbers solicited to lend a hand? Why is the work divided and subdivided between so many classes of labourers? Why is there a place for those who bear, and a place for those who hew, and a place for those who chip? Why is there such an enormous number of workmen as a hundred and eighty-three thousand and six hundred in a work protracted over seven years? Can there be any answer but one? Do we not see that Solomon wants to be engaged in a work which will be the work of the nation—of the whole nation in all its parts and in all its members. He wants his people to be able to say, not only, 'Solomon did it,' but, 'We all did it with Solomon.' He desires that every representative of Jewish life shall have a stone in the building. The children shall bring their gifts to it; the adults shall bring their hands to it; the aged shall bring their prayers to it. The rich shall adorn it with gems; the poor shall serve it with their workmanship. The men of action shall break stones for it; the men of patience shall carry burdens for it; the men of taste shall contrib-

ute decorations for it. The poets shall make its songs; the musicians shall weave its memories; the theologians shall form its ritual. That is the hope of Solomon—the dream of repiecing the rent garment. It is the hope that the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin may become tributaries to the river of God, that the wars sown in a divided empire may be forgotten in a united worship, and that the house of Saul may be joined to the house of David by that mysterious secret pasage which runs through the house of the Lord.

LORD, Thou art building a temple greater than that of Solomon—the temple of the Holy Ghost! Give me a stone in the building of that house! Give me a place in the work, suited to my soul! If I have many places in my soul, give me many duties for the temple! In my time of singing, train me for its choir! In my time of business, enrich me for its maintenance! In my time of health, strengthen me to raise its walls! In my time of sickness, give me patience to bear its burdens! I would bring all my possessions of body and mind as subscriptions to the building. I bring Thee my

gladness for its morning hymn. I bring Thee my sadness for its evening song. I bring Thee my beauty for its adorning. I bring Thee my defects for its altar of sacrifice. I bring Thee my strength that I may support some part; I bring Thee my weakness that some part may support *me*. I bring Thee my moments of faith that there may be service by day; I bring Thee my moments of doubt that there may be service by night. I bring Thee my full cup for the hour of thanksgiving; I bring Thee my empty cup for the hour of prayer. Let all the gates of Thy temple be open to my soul, O Lord; for I know not, in life's revolving, before what portal I may need to stand!

# CHAPTER IV

## ELIJAH THE IMPULSIVE

THERE are three men whom the Bible Gallery dissociates from the idea of death—Enoch, Moses, and Elijah. Of each of these it is virtually declared that no one can picture for them a burying-place. Enoch has left no record of a closing life; Moses has left no trace of a physical decay; Elijah has left no sign of an extinguished fire. It is not, I think, by accident that the Great Gallery has dissociated these three forms from the idea of the dark valley. These three forms represent three qualities which have no historical limit, which are found side by side in every age—the spirit, the conscience, and the heart. Enoch represents the spirit—the craving for Divine communion. Moses represents the conscience—the eternal law of human duty. Elijah represents the heart—the power that acts from the impulse of the moment. These three phases of mind cannot be localised; they are historically

immortal. We cannot say that spirituality belongs to one century, conscience to another, impulse to a third. We cannot even say that within the memory of civilised man these three have developed. Spinoza is not in advance of Plato; Paul is not morally the superior of Moses; Luther is not more intense than Simon Peter. In all ages of civilised time man has exhibited equally these three phases—the spiritual, the moral, and the intuitive. They have been, within this limit, not only deathless, but seemingly changeless. The Gallery has proclaimed their immortality. It has incarnated each in the person of a separate life, and then it has shown us that life standing apart from the elements of decay. Enoch has no tomb; Moses has no shroud; Elijah has no setting to the chariot of his sun.

There is nothing which localises a man like the record of his death. When you announce the date of a man's death, you fix the limit of his personal development in the present world. When you announce the date of his marriage, or the date of his first publication, you give no clue to his ultimate mental standpoint. But the inscription on the tombstone is the latest possible record concerning the man; it stamps

indelibly his century upon him; it marks the final stretch of his environment. Here lies the *significance* of this record of the Gallery! When it shows us Enoch translated, when it conceals the body of Moses, when it reveals Elijah ascending in his chariot of fire, it virtually says: 'Do not regard these men as belonging to a particular century. Look at them as symbolising those three phases of the human mind which are the same in all centuries. View them as embodiments of the fact that there are three permanent elements in humanity—the devotional, the moral, and the instinctive. Consider them as revealers of the truth that, whatever *else* may faint or grow weary, these three will never die—the breathings of the spirit, the commands of the conscience, and the impulses of the heart.'

I have attributed to Elijah the third of these positions. I regard him as distinctively the man of impulse, the man who is prompted by instinctive dictates. His life is one of sudden movements, of surprises. He is more like a lance than a sword. He does not fence; he darts. He breaks forth suddenly from the silence, and as suddenly vanishes. Everything about him is abrupt; his beginning and his

ending are abrupt. He comes without introduction, and he goes without warning. He appears before us like Melchisedek—without father or mother or descent. We see no childhood. We discover no home. We recognise no domestic interest. He comes before us as the Christ of St. Mark comes before us—full-grown, developed, equipped for his mission. He stands forth all at once in the political arena. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we are confronted by a spectral form denouncing idolatry, predicting vengeance. Not in the valley does he first appear. We see no trace of one who needs to *climb*. When we earliest meet him, it is at the top of the hill. He hurls his rebuke right at the throne. Reformers as a rule begin with the masses and creep up gradually to the classes. Elijah begins at the social summit. He stands in the court of Ahab, in the court of Jezebel; our first vision of him is in the presence of kings. He bursts upon us in full meridian. There is no gradation between the depth of silence and the blare of trumpets—yesterday he was voiceless; to-day he is thunder. It is written of John the Baptist, 'He was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel.' That

could be written of Elijah. His development is quite hid from us. There is no boundary line between his desert and his glory. We do not see him rise; we behold him risen. A few minutes ago there was darkness all round; suddenly we are in the presence of a great fire whose kindling has been invisible to us, and whose origin we do not know.

It is my opinion that the history of Elijah, as recorded in the Great Gallery, is the history of all impulsive minds. The course of all such minds is a process not of increasing, but of subsiding flame. I do not mean that they ever diminish the actual amount of their heat; but they diminish the amount of their heat in any one direction. All impulse is at first onesided. It sees only a single way—the drastic way. It looks at the barren fig-tree and says, 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground!' In after times it loses its haste—not from declining zeal, but from increasing vision. It sees that there are other ways of dealing with the fig-tree—that zeal may be intense without being drastic. This, if I mistake not, is the course of Elijah—a gradual subsiding from the roar into the whisper. It is a voice growing softer, becoming ever more calm—not because the

heat has lost its passion, not because the soul has drooped its wing, but because the eye has seen more clearly the hope of ultimate success.

Let us examine this process in the life of Elijah—this gradual subsiding of noise. He begins most vociferously. Like the Baptist, he comes out of his desert and shouts, 'Repent!' His *motive,* however, is different from that of the Baptist. The Baptist denounced loose living; Elijah denounces idolatry. The Old Testament Prophet is more allied to the John who stood before Queen Mary than to the John who stood before King Herod. To John Knox, indeed, he presents a strong parallel. Elijah, like Knox, is the child of a Protestant reaction. He appears as the champion of a faith which he believes to be the primitive faith—the worship of an invisible God. Men had sought to worship God in a material form, to see Him enshrined in some object of human sense. Elijah calls them to come back—back to the forest primeval, back to those grounds of Eden where God was distinct from the trees of the garden. Elijah is the uncompromising Protestant of his time, an opponent of the image in the sanctuary. But

his weapons as yet are purely physical. He brings no arguments; he exhibits no reasons. The message he delivers is a menace, 'Abandon your ideals, or die!' He recognises but one force—outward compulsion. 'You have bowed down to idols; you will have drought and famine!'—that is the burden of his message. There is no appeal to philosophy; there is no invitation to a controversy; there is no attempt to exhibit the inherent nature of the sin. There is simply a call to arms—a command to extirpate those who revered the forms of Nature.

Elijah, then, displays at the outset the full amount of his fire—his fire concentrated on a single point. The problem is, how to get that fire distributed. We do not wish to see it extinguished; we do not even wish to see it reduced; we want to see it diffused—spread in different directions—made less onesided. The effect of all onesided emotion is a collapse of the man who feels it. It is so with Elijah. Where do we next meet with him? In a desert place by the side of the brook Cherith. What has brought him there? The fear of King Ahab, says the Bible student. I do not believe it. Has he not just been in the presence of Ahab, bearding him to the face, denouncing

his idolatry, proclaiming his retribution! If Elijah had been a timid man, then was the time for fear. Could you imagine a man who braved Ahab to his face running off in terror when Ahab had turned his back! No—not in terror. But I could imagine him doing so in physical prostration. In fact, no other explanation can be given. Why should this brave, bold man, who had met the hour of danger with unblanched cheek, be found, when the crisis was past, lurking in a desolate spot by the brook Cherith! It can only be accounted for by nerve-exhaustion—by the process of reaction from strong emotion. Elijah at the brook Cherith is an illustration of that principle which has ruled in all minds of onesided impulse. If he had been divided between anger and sorrow and pity, he would have experienced no mental reaction; the alternations of feeling would have saved him from collapse. But he abandoned himself to a single impulse, and the inevitable result was the prostration at the waters of Cherith.

And now I have to observe that this reaction was the finest training which the man could possibly have received. It gave him his first lesson in something he had much need

to learn—the superiority of mental force to material force. He had been conquering Ahab by physical strength; but immediately afterwards he is himself conquered by a silently-working influence—a power impalpable to sense, independent of weapons. He has been prostrated by a process working quicker than famine, quicker than drought, quicker than pestilence—prostrated by the very sweep of his own mental energy. Was not this a message to his soul that he had mistaken the comparative strength of the natural forces! Did it not say to him that he had chosen the least powerful agency when he selected drought and famine as the ministers of God! Did it not tell him that he should have appealed to the *mind* of Ahab—that he should have tried to exhibit rather the inner than the outer majesty of God! Elijah was to be taught that the best cure for idolatry was not the exhibition of the Divine hand, but the exhibition of the Divine heart, that God was better than the idol, not because He could break the idol, but because He could give what the idol could not—help in the day of trouble.

Elijah, then, must be taught that the highest glory of true religion, and what distinguishes

it from false religion, is its power to minister. And this, by the brook Cherith, is God's lesson to his soul. The ravens unconsciously bring him food. Unable in the famine to find grain, they bear to the spot the bodies of animals which they have slain, and deposit them there for their future use. Elijah inherits the fruit of their labours. He appropriates the spoil they have gathered; but he regards them as his unconscious almoners. Yet, by his countrymen the raven had always been deemed an unholy thing. It was ill-omened. The lamb, the dove, and the goat were objects of Divine association; the raven was not—men did not present it in sacrifice. But here *God* presents it in sacrifice—tells Elijah to receive it as His minister. And then there comes a strange call to Elijah which perhaps I may be allowed to paraphrase: 'Elijah, there are better modes of teaching My service than breaking and bruising. You have been ministered unto by creatures which you deem unholy; will not *you* minister unto such! If I can make sacrilegious things My instruments, shall *you* be afraid to *touch* them! Will you not best conquer them by showing them the beauty of holiness! Come, and I will tell you how to

show the beauty of holiness to one of those whom you call sacrilegious. There is a widow in great want in the country of Tyre and Sidon. She is beyond the boundaries of your land. She belongs to a heathen population. She worships Me not after the pattern of your fathers. But she has a body of like passions with you. She has felt the hunger which you have felt—the hunger which the ravens have fed. Go, and minister to her as the ravens have ministered to you! You will reveal to her the power of your God more clearly by that deed than by all the storms of denunciation and all the instruments of destruction.'

Do we not see that the aim of this call is to broaden Elijah—to lead him to the belief that the absence of true religion is not so much something to be punished with famine as something which proves famine to be already there. He is to be made to feel that the man or woman so afflicted is primarily an object, not of anger, but of pity. He is to be led to realise that the subjects of this malady are experiencing a sense of want, and therefore are objects of charity rather than marks for vengeance. That is the reason why every stage of Elijah's course is a humbling stage. He is

constantly met by some privation; every morning of hope is followed by a night of despair. Why so, we are inclined to ask; why should God obstruct the missionary work of His servant? Simply because the obstruction of the work is, in his case, the advancement of the *man*. What he needs to know, above all things, is the sense of want—the sympathy with human weakness. He has been born with too much independence in his heart. His native instinct is towards self-reliance. What he deems easy he thinks everybody should deem easy. The lesson he needs from life is an experience of individual feebleness. Elijah is the natural opposite of David. David had conflicting currents in him, and therefore he felt weak; Elijah had originally only one current, and therefore he felt strong. The aim of the Almighty is to send new currents through him, and so to make him feel more conflict. He is not humanitarian enough, because he is not near enough to the ground. He does not make allowance for human frailty, because he is too confident of *himself*. He must be taught self-distrust, that he may learn the needs of Man. The greatest convert made by Elijah's mission was to be—Elijah.

Not all at once did this conversion come; it was gradual. When next the curtain rises, he is already in some measure liberalised. He consents to meet the idolaters at an Œcumenical Council on Mount Carmel. That was a large concession from a man of his uncompromising spirit. This was not the method in which he had first met Ahab. *Then* he had allowed *no* discussion; he had simply said, 'Accept the doctrine or receive the scourge!' Now it is otherwise. He proposes a test of truth—a mental test—the comparative power of prayer. Let us try, he says, which of our prayers will impart most fire to life! That was a fair field of battle; what can be a better test of religion than its power to impart vital fire! It was a field on which Elijah was sure to win. No unspiritual worship is ever kindling; love alone can illuminate the common way. Elijah triumphed in the argument; he showed what on his side had been wrought by prayer. It would have been well had he rested with that victory. But the militant instinct was not dead within him. The meeting closed in bloodshed. What happened I do not exactly know; the Picture in the Gallery leaves something to the imagination. I suppose that Elijah, heated by

his new kind of triumph, harangued the crowd and rhetorically called upon his countrymen to root out from among them these corrupters of the national faith. I suppose that the crowd, mistaking rhetoric for prose, and interpreting the exhortation to extirpate a *principle* as the command to slay its adherents, rushed frantically and tumultuously on the prophets of Baal and gave them the crown of martyrdom. That Elijah designed the deed, I do not believe; that he regretted it, I firmly hold. Yet it was the fruit of his onesided passion, and it brought a dark night to close a bright day.

The martyrdom he had given to Baal was *indeed* a crown; violence always helps the cause on which it tramples. The clamours of the land rose against Elijah. To a man conscious of the justice of his deed this would have been little; but Elijah's inner man rose against *himself*. The prophet of God fled. From whom did he flee? Was it from Ahab? Was it from Jezebel? Was it from the friends of the martyred men of Baal? No; it was from his own inner man. Elijah saw his other self —the self that was bound for heaven. It was as yet only a child; but it made him tremble.

It shook his nerves; it paralysed his self-confidence. He ran to escape the child, but the child ran with him; the child was his angel sent from God. He ran to Beersheba; he found the child at Beersheba. He fled into the Arabian desert; he met the child there. He lay down to die, under a juniper tree; the child sustained him. He came to Horeb and hid himself in a mountain cave; the child suddenly became full-grown, and Elijah recognised his true self.

For now there bursts upon his view a wondrous vision—the vision of his own life; and, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he finds that he has been on the wrong way. He hears a roaring wind; he says, 'Is it Thou, Lord?'—there is no answer. He feels a trembling of the earth; he says, 'Is it Thou, Lord?'—there is no answer. He sees a ball of fire shot into the air; he says, 'Is it Thou, Lord?'—there is no answer. He catches the sound of a still, small voice, so low that he can hardly detect it; he says, 'Is it Thou, Lord?'—and the answer comes, 'It is I.'

Could anything more completely reveal the plan of the Gallery in delineating the figure of Elijah! The design is popularly thought to

be the exhibition of a physical heroism. It is the reverse. It is the exhibition of a process by which a great soul was made meet for heaven by altering its ideal of heroism from the physical to the mental. The plan of the Picture is to reveal a work of transition—a work in which the original mountain became a valley and the original valley became a mountain. In the cave of Horeb the transition was complete. The old Elijah was buried there, and the new Elijah emerged full-grown. The child had conquered the man and left his body in the cave; the still, small voice had triumphed over the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. Henceforth I see a change in Elijah. His alternations of hope and despair have vanished, and in their room there has come an equable calm. He is more trustful in adversity; he is more merciful in prosperity. His later denunciations are rather against inhumanity to Man than against errors in creed or ritual. He avenges, and rightly avenges, the wrongs of Naboth; but, for the first time in the record of his life, his vengeance is mixed with leniency—a leniency all the more remarkable because it was exercised towards his consistent and inveterate enemy, Ahab. No

man can resist the conclusion that the Elijah who emerges from the cave of Horeb is an altered being. He is no longer a flaming sword; he is a human voice—wakened by human sympathies, tuned by human feelings. He has been made more fit to meet Moses on the Mount; the power of action has been joined to the power of waiting.

The working of this change was doubtless mainly from within. But it was not wholly so. That voice in the cave of Horeb said many things; but it said one thing which, to my mind, was specially helpful to the future development of Elijah—it directed him where to find a human friend. If there was one thing Elijah needed to mellow him, it was that! He seems never to have felt the influence of home ties. We read of no brother or sister; we hear of no wife or child. His life throughout had been one of war, of public commotion, of political and religious strife. Superiors he had, inferiors he had; but, so far as I know, he had hitherto possessed no equals. There had been no comrade of his heart, no companion of his soul, none to take his hand and say, 'We are brothers.' A man in such a position is in want of one-half of life's music. Was it not well to

send him the friend Elisha! When the voice sent him to Elisha, it sent him to a new school —a school in which he would meet a kindred mind and experience at the last those ties of human sympathy to which the days of his actual childhood had been strangers. There, in the companionship of Elisha, we will for the present leave him—ripening for a higher destiny and preparing for enrolment in a loftier band than the prophets of ancient Israel.

I THANK Thee, O Lord, that to Elijah and to me Thou hast revealed a new and better way. I thank Thee that the still, small voice has taken the place of the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. I used to think that *law* would redeem Thy world. I thought that stern penalties would repress the course of crime. I thought the thunders of Sinai would make the sinner pure. I thought the vision of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone would put out the love of evil. Thou hast taught me better, O my Father! Thou hast taught me that the love of evil can only be extinguished by *another* love. My heart can-

not be conquered by the hand. If it is centred on the Prince of Evil, it will not be cured by the *imprisonment* of that prince; I should love him in his prison, I should love him in his bonds. If I am to cease loving him, I must have a *new* prince—the Prince of Peace. Send me this new Prince, O my Father; nothing but Christ will put out Barabbas from my heart! I love wrongly, but none the less do I love intensely; nothing but *another* love will set me free. Famine will not; Carmel will not; wind and earthquake and fire will not; the burning lake itself would not extinguish my love! Therefore, my Father, let me love again, let me love anew! Send into my heart a fresh ideal! Send me a sight of the 'altogether lovely'! Send me a vision of the 'chief among ten thousand'! Send me a picture of Him who is 'fairer than the children of men'! Break the old ideal by the vision of a higher beauty! Let my night fade in Thy morning, my thorn vanish in Thy flower! One leaf of Thy summer's bloom will disenchant me of the winter's charm. The idols will be 'broken in the temple of Baal' when I see Thy King 'on the holy hill of Zion.'

# CHAPTER V

## ELISHA THE IMITATIVE

As I pause before the figure of Elisha, perhaps the thought suggested to a bystander will be, Why do you make *this* a representative man! Is not the most distinctive feature about him just his want of originality! Is he not almost a direct copy of the form and face of Elijah—so direct that, if there were no name inscribed below the Picture, we should deem it simply a second likeness by an inferior hand! If so, why *linger* over the second delineation! We have seen the fire in the eye of the master; why pause to describe in the disciple the same eye *without* the fire! Should we not be better employed if we passed to fresh woods and pastures new!

Let me admit at once that the parallel *is* striking—far too striking to be the result of accident or unconscious workmanship. Elijah and Elisha are twin figures—what the one does, the other does. Their lives are set to the

same music; the latter is the refrain of the former sung by a weaker voice and tuned to a slower measure. Does Elijah smite the waters of Jordan; Elisha does so too. Does Elijah ascend Mount Carmel; Elisha does so too. Do the words of Elijah cause a bloody tragedy; the words of Elisha do so too. Is Elijah appealed to in times of drought; Elisha is so too. Does Elijah multiply a widow's store; Elisha does so too. Does Elijah raise a widow's son; Elisha raises one too. Does Elijah carry his beneficence beyond the confines of Judaism; Elisha does so too—if the one ministers to a woman of Zarephath, the other cures the captain of a Syrian band. Finally, does Elijah in his last earthly moments hear the triumphant cry, 'The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof'; Elisha in *his* last earthly moments listens to the same sound, and experiences at the hour of death what his master had experienced at the hour of ascension.

If, then, I admit this remarkable parallel, if I regard Elisha as a designed imitation of Elijah, why do I not pass him by as a repetition of old material? It is because this imitation of character is itself in the Old Testament

Gallery a new and unique thing. I do not know whether it has occurred to any one that the relation of Elisha to Elijah supplies a *desideratum* in the Gallery. Amongst the figures of this collection I look in vain for any evidence of that community of mind which in the New Testament is called fellowship. Up to this point we have not found in these studies two men who have been united by similarity of spirit. The one has rather been the *complement* of the other, has supplied what was lacking in the other. Isaac has little likeness to Abraham; Joseph moves in a different sphere from Jacob; Solomon has few points in common with David. Joshua may be called the disciple of Moses, but only in a figurative sense. He is more a servant than a son; he carries out his orders, but he does not stand with him on the Mount. The truth is, kindred sympathy is a very rare thing to get. Personal *liking*—the feeling that subsisted between David and Jonathan—is very easily acquired; but the congruity of thought, the identity of experience, which made the bond between Elisha and Elijah—that is something which is never acquired at all; the germ of it must be born in each soul. To exhibit this double por-

tion of one experience is a work which may well absorb the interest of the religious artist.

This, then, is a case of intellectual friendship which is unique in the Old Testament Gallery. I have said that in germ Elisha must have had from birth the spirit of Elijah. But the question occurs, To which of the Elijahs was he allied? We have seen that there were two—that one died in the cave of Horeb, and that the other came out of the cave full-grown. Elisha never saw the first; his personal contact was with the second. The second Elijah, the Elijah who emerged from the cave, was of a gentler nature than the first; he had abandoned for the still, small voice the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. Elisha was by nature allied to this *later* Elijah. God had given him a tender heart, a heart of love. When first we meet with him, it is in the circle of family life; and we have evidence that his ties of home were dear. Elijah finds him at the plough and calls him to quit the world for the prophetic sanctuary. He asks to be allowed to bid his father and mother goodbye. And that goodbye is a fine revelation of character. He makes a feast to his old friends. He wants them to understand that he has not parted

with them in anger, has not left the world because the grapes are sour or the vintage bad. When a man is going abroad, we often give him a parting dinner to wish him well. But if a man going abroad gives *us* a parting dinner, the act has a still deeper significance. It says that, however prosperous he may be in the new country, he wishes it to be understood that the old land will still be dear to his heart. He says, in effect, I do not leave you through disgust; I do not quit you through disapproval; I do not say that it is bad for you to remain; I part from your world not in a blast of anger, but in a flood of joyous memories which, even while it bears me away, repeats the echoes from my native shore.

Elisha, then, even in the hour of his election, is no ascetic. He brings to Elijah a human heart. It was the latest and the best gift Elijah had ever received—a pure earthly friendship. Elisha gave him his heart, his whole heart, his unrestrained heart. I cannot too strongly emphasise this point; it is something unique in the Old Gallery. Men had hitherto come to God through a *crucifixion* of their human nature. They had approached Mount Sinai with fear and trembling; they

had drawn near the burning bush with uncovered feet. But Elisha comes unshorn of his humanity. He comes to the Divine Presence in the dress of a man, with the heart of a man. He is drawn to the heavenly Father by the love of an earthly *brother*. He is not ashamed, from the very outset, to lean upon a human arm. This utilising of earthly help remains his characteristic through life; it colours every sphere through which he moves. I will take four of these spheres—the moral, the intellectual, the æsthetic, and the practical. We shall find, I think, in each, abundant material for reflection and abundant sources of suggestion.

The first illustration of Elisha's tendency to use secular help is in his moral choice. His master, Elijah, has a premonition of his own early removal. He asks the disciple what mark of his favour he would like best to receive as a parting gift. Elisha answers, 'Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me!' By 'a double portion' I understand 'a repeated portion—a repetition of your own experience.' It is the request for a token of human love. He does not wish the grace of God to be for him a supernatural thing. He wants to be like some one whom he loves, and whom he loves

on account of his goodness. Is not Christianity the selfsame prayer on a higher plane. Is it not simply the wish that in our hearts the grace of God would assume the likeness of one whom we love—the Man Christ Jesus. Like Elisha, we cannot worship an abstract grace. We must see it embodied if we are to love it. Our desire to be clothed in it must be the desire to be clothed in the likeness of one who was dear to us. St. John was animated by a *human* love of Jesus; therefore he does not say, 'When He shall appear we shall be good,' but, 'When He shall appear we shall be like Him.'

That Elisha's aspiration was the request for a token of love is confirmed by Elijah's answer, 'Thou hast asked a great thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it will be so unto thee; if not, it shall not be so.' He says that whether his disciple's desire be or be not granted is a question that can only be tested by Elisha's future remembrance. Separated from the figurative envelope which contains them, his words amount to this: 'The test of a kindred spirit is sight in absence. Can you sustain that test? Can you see me when I am taken up? Can you feel the power of my

presence when that presence is no longer with you? Can you be impelled by my influence when I have withdrawn my hand? Can I be a motive to your life when I have ceased to be in touch with it? If so, then you have indeed received into your soul a duplicate of my image! You have proved your possession of a kindred nature; you have maintained your right to wear my mantle!'

Remember that the test proposed by Elijah is also the test proposed by a greater than Elijah. What else does Christ mean by the parable of a man going into a far country and bidding his servants work till his return. It is to ascertain whether they are fit for the mantle, whether they have received his spirit. The test of that will be their power to think of his presence in his absence, to feel as if he were near when he is far away. The evidence of the disciple's communion with Christ is identical with Elisha's evidence for his communion with Elijah; it is the 'seeing him who is invisible,' the bending to an influence which is not manifested either to the eye or to the ear or to the hand. Elisha saw Elijah after he was taken up, the disciples worshipped Jesus after the cloud had received Him out of their

sight; in both cases it was an evidence that the mantle had descended.

Elisha, then, was helped to the grace of God by a human love; and that human love abode with him long after its object had been hid from his outward sight. It is the first instance of the kind we have met with in the Great Gallery; but it has been the forerunner of many similar experiences. There are hundreds whose belief in God sprang at first from belief in Man. There are hundreds who have given their allegiance to the Divine by fixing their eye upon some beauty in the human. There are hundreds who, like Elisha, have served the God whom they have *not* seen simply because they have loved the brother whom they *have* seen. This old Painting is not superannuated, not dead. It is living, breathing, vitalising. It is mirrored in myriad lives; it is reproduced in countless experiences; it is a picture which is not Jewish nor Greek nor Roman, but human. It expresses, not the bias of a nation, but an instinct of the heart; and therefore its colours are not dimmed by time —they are as fresh and vivid to-day as they were in the streets of ancient Israel.

The second illustration of Elisha's secular

attitude will be found in the intellectual sphere. He has been left alone; the master whom he loved has passed into the silent land. Elisha has no doubt that he has been translated into heaven; he is as sure of that as he is of his own existence. But Elisha is a professor in a college. He has the Chair of Apologetics—the direction of what was then called 'The School of the Prophets.' He has a host of young men who listen to his instructions, and for whose training he is responsible. These young men are tinged with the spirit of a new age—an age of rationalism. They are very unwilling to admit a miracle. They are eager to reduce everything to natural causes. They propose to subject the belief in Elijah's ascension to scientific experts. They suggest that his chariot may have been one of the wild blasts of the desert. Instead of being taken to heaven, he may have been carried to the summit of some hill, where he may be lying bruised and broken. Will not Elisha allow a search to be made. Instead of cherishing a mystical exaltation, will he not let fifty strong men go forth in search of the vanished prophet. If they should find him, it would be the death of sentiment, but it might produce a

result which would prove more valuable than any sentiment—the preservation of a physical life.

At first Elisha said, No; but afterwards he said, Yes. That saying 'Yes' is to my mind one of the finest things in old literature. Why does he say 'Yes'? Is it because he has any doubt of the truth of his first impression? He has no doubt. But he has cast himself down from his own pinnacle; he has put himself in the place of his students; he has tried to live in the experience of those who have less strong faith than himself. He feels that he has Elijah for his model. Did not Elijah hold a council for research on Mount Carmel—Elijah who needed no investigation, no argument. Should the disciple be above his master. Might not he, Elisha, do what was virtually done by the prophet of fire. If his master could sink himself to help idolaters, might not *he* sink himself for the sake of his own students. Should he not go down to *them* who were as yet unable to come up to *him*.

Now, I say this was grand in Elisha. If all his prophetic powers should come to be ignored, he ought to live by this deed alone. It was the best lesson he ever gave to his students

—this accommodation to their intellectual need. It is a lesson for professors as well as students. I would say to a teacher: Never force your certainty upon your pupil. Borrowed convictions are of no value. Command not assent to former testimonies—not even to the authority of your own vision. Let the pupil search for Elijah. Let him seek him on every hill; let him inquire for his steps in every valley. Lend him all facilities for the search. Open every avenue; unlock every gate; clear every barrier that would impede his way. At the end of many days he may reach by climbing the height which you have gained by a moment on the wing.

The third of those spheres in which Elisha leans upon material help in the things of Divine grace is the æsthetic region—the attempt to exhibit the beauties of holiness. Elisha has gone to meet three kings. It is a period of political emergency, and they have summoned him into their presence to ask his counsel. Elisha is impressed with the august character of his audience. He wishes to speak well. He is not only desirous to do his duty in the sight of God, but to magnify his office in the sight of Man. He has the feeling which belongs to

every popular preacher—the wish to produce an æsthetic effect upon his hearers; and it is a feeling which is quite compatible with the most earnest religious devotion. Accordingly, he wishes to rise to the occasion. In order to do so, he would like the aid of a stimulus. The stimulus he selects is music. 'Bring me a minstrel!' he says. He feels that he would speak better if he has a pleasant environment; he evokes the aid of nature to help him in the sphere of grace.

Now, this is a very startling thing. We all admit the power of natural beauty in the region of natural work. That a poet is helped by a sunbeam, that a literary style is influenced by fair surroundings, that imagination is stimulated by a starry night or quickened by a mountain view—all this is universally accepted. But in the sphere of grace we are apt to think such helps superfluous. We are apt to believe that the Spirit of God is a solitary agent acting by its own strength and conquering by its own power. We think of the beauties of holiness as *themselves* sufficient to inspire. Shall the heavenly manna seek an ally in the earthly music! Shall the hand of God work in unison with the harp of man! Shall

the soul be aided to its vision of Divine glory by listening to the strains of a purely human melody, and thrilling to the notes of an instrument with mundane strings!

Elisha says, Yes; he calls for a minstrel before prophesying. The minstrel was probably a man vastly inferior to himself, and was perhaps not a religious man at all; yet Elisha was not ashamed to use him for the service of God. Was he here again influenced by the memory of Elijah, by the tendency to imitate his master? Did he remember how that master was fed by ravens? Did he remember how the mightiest was supported by the ministration of the meanest? Did he remember how the mere secular forces of life had been made to serve the kingdom of God? I think it likely. Elisha must have felt that if the tempestuous soul of his master could be content to be fed by earthly streams, the quiet river of his own life might well be thus satisfied too. At all events, he *was* content. He was satisfied to sun himself in a worldly beauty, to cheer himself into the work for God by a study of the work of man. In his moment of spiritual exhaustion he sought a secular stimulus. At a time when he had nothing to draw with, he let a

Samaritan bring the pitcher. In the hour when his alabaster box was broken, he allowed his costliest treasures to be carried in earthen vessels.

And the Christian Church has followed the example of Elisha. The voice of that Church has ever increasingly been, 'Bring me a minstrel!' She began *without* the ministrel—in the humble precincts of an upper room. But she found that she needed stimulus. She was marching as an army to battle, and, like an army marching to battle, she required a blast of music. Christianity has ascended the hill to the tune of trumpets on the plain; the feet of the Christian soldier have moved in unison with the measure of an *earthly* melody. The religion of the Cross has proceeded up the Dolorous Way crowned with the flowers of the world's field. It has availed itself of every secular aid. It has beautified the places of its worship. It has imparted human graces to its heavenly services. It has cultivated by natural art the voices of its choristers. It has sent its prophets to drink at the wells of worldly wisdom. It has given a literary form to its liturgies. It has incorporated with its psalmody the sentiments of men *not* called inspired.

When we see the Christian Church ascending, we cry with Elisha, 'The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!' but we feel that the chariots and the horsemen belong to different worlds—that the horsemen are of heaven, the chariots of earth.

I come now to the fourth of these spheres in which Elisha allies himself to the secular; it is the practical sphere—the sphere of the physician. The incident to which I allude is the healing of Naaman the Syrian. He is a leper, and he repairs to Elisha in the hope of a cure. Elisha tells him to bathe seven times in the waters of Jordan. Naaman is incensed; he thinks the prophet has insulted him. Why so? Myriads of sermons have been written on the subject; and the prevailing note of all has been that Naaman was offended by the simplicity of the proposed remedy. Do you think that likely! If I go to a doctor, expecting to be prescribed a drastic operation, and if I am told instead simply to bathe in cold water, am I not likely rather to congratulate myself than to feel angry! Naaman himself says in the narrative that he would have been content with something much *more* simple—a mere touch of the prophet's hand. The sting lay in

the fact that the prophet himself took no *part* in the cure. He handed Naaman over to the powers of Nature—to the waters of Jordan. Naaman wanted to be the subject of a supernatural influence—to be directly favoured by the emissary of the God of Israel. That emissary, instead of calling in mysterious helps, instead of engaging in prayer or indulging in incantations, sent him to a bathing establishment and told him to continue his attendance there until the cleansing process was complete. Naaman very naturally felt that he might have found such institutions nearer home. The entire ground of his anger lay in the knowledge that Elisha was not eager to be thought the *agent* in the cure, that, instead of being proud to have so august a patient, he had calmly handed him over to the care of one of his assistant physicians—to the medical skill of the waters of Jordan.

What to Naaman was a source of anger is to us a source of satisfaction; we are glad that Elisha, when he sought the help of God, sought it through the channels of Nature—that he claimed the secular forces as workers of the Divine will. But I think that here, as elsewhere, Elisha was influenced by that per-

sonal memory which had been his constant guide. *Why* does he send Naaman to the waters of Jordan? Was it not because these waters embodied the latest memory of him whom he loved—that memory which had imparted to Elisha himself a healing touch in every hour of weariness, and had inspired him with fresh strength amid the burden and heat of the day. It was on the banks of Jordan that he had gazed on Elijah almost for the last time; it was on the banks of Jordan that he had seen his very last act of power. It was love's latest image in his soul. In sending Naaman to Jordan, he felt that he was sending him to Elijah. He was putting him in hands that were mightier than his own. He was evoking the spirit of his departed friend to help his healing work, nay, to be the sole agent in that work. He says, in effect, 'I commit this man into thy hands; thou who hast smitten the waters of Jordan, smite, *upon* these waters, the leprosy of Naaman!' From first to last the spirit of Elijah had remained his guiding star. It had spoken to him from the silent land. He had dedicated everything to its memory, to its example. To that memory he dedicated the waters of Jordan too. They were, to him,

sparkling with the sunset of yesterday, and he sent the leper Naaman to be partaker of their beams.

I THANK Thee, O Father, that in the Pictures of the Great Gallery there is a memorial to human friendship—to the love of two human souls. I thank Thee that Thou hast suffered Elisha to be swayed by the memory of a departed friend; it is Thine own imprimatur on the sacredness of earthly love. I thank Thee that Thou hast allowed my heart to wear the mantle of the *departed*. Thou hast not forced me to think of the chariots and horsemen that have borne him away. Thou hast permitted me to picture my Elijah in the old scenes. Thou hast allowed me to figure him on the heights of Carmel and on the banks of Jordan. Thou hast suffered me to hear his footsteps on my earthly way—to be guided by his example, to be inspired by his remembrance. Why hast Thou not bid me *forget?* Why hast Thou not told Elisha to think of his own way and let his friend rest behind the veil? Why hast Thou counselled him to look up and see if any mantle from his vanished friend is falling?

Is it not to tell him, to tell me, that love is eternal! Is it not to tell me that the chariot of fire cannot part human friendships! Is it not to tell me that the fire of death cannot burn up the mantle of earthly influence! Often in the vision of departing chariots I am complaining of the *waste* of life. I see men taken up before their work is done, and I weep for their unfinishedness. Teach me by this scene in the Great Gallery that Elijah can finish his work from *beyond* the grave! Teach me that the box of ointment is *not* wasted when it is broken! Teach me that the fragrance can fill the house when the fragments are on the floor! Teach me that a departed life may hold in my heart an empire which no *present* life can claim! *So* shall I learn the immortality of love!

# CHAPTER VI[1]

## JOB THE PATIENT

THE Portrait of Job has been attributed to every date between the extremes of a thousand years—from the call of Abraham to the calling back of Judah's bondage. My own opinion is that it dates from the Persian period, I think that an artist of that day delineated the facts of a real historic tradition; but I believe that he used them to express an allegory. Job is to me not merely an individual; he is that and something more. He is the personification of the Jewish race in captivity. Through the personality of Job the artist aims to show that the afflictions of his people ought not to be attributed to any special sin, and that the exile they have been doomed to bear may itself have been a part of their mission from the Highest. The fact that when the Portrait was being painted the national

[1] This chapter is an abstract of my Murtle Lecture delivered in the Mitchell Hall, Aberdeen University, on December 15, 1901.

clouds were already beginning to be parted by streaks of sunshine, may have lent inspiration to the thought. I turn, however, from the critical to the human. I will view this not as the portrait of a nation, but as the portrait of a man, and I will only consider in it those qualities which belong to the individual heart; Judah has passed away, but Job abides.

There have been four typical notes of despair in the region of literature. The first and most intense is the voice of Omar Khayyám. It is despair absolute, despair of life all round, despair whose only relief is to drown itself in wine. The second is the Book of Ecclesiastes. I would call it despair of *results*. It does not deny that it is a pleasant thing to see the light of the sun; it does not dispute that there is a time to dance as well as a time to weep; but it asks, What is the good of it; does it not all end in vanity! The third is the cry of Pascal. It is despair of everything finite—finite reason, finite love, finite pleasure; the only possible joy is joy in God. The fourth is that dramatic portraiture which we call the Book of Job. I would describe it as the despair of old theories. It is the *least* despondent of the group. It does not say that the world is bad;

it does not say that life is vanity; it does not even say that finite things cannot bring joy. What it does say is that all the past theories to explain the evils of the universe have been utterly powerless to account for these evils, that none of them is fit to sustain the weight of human woes, and that all of them put together are inadequate to wipe the tear from a single eye. The Book of Job is not strictly a pessimistic book. It does not despair of the universe—spite of all its sorrows! What it does despair of is the adequacy of any one of man's existing theories, or of all these theories united, to furnish a *solution* of its sorrows. It does not deny that there may be summer somewhere beyond the sea; but it refuses to accept the doctrine that any of the previous swallows have ever touched the gilded shore.

Now, observe carefully *why* the Book of Job rejects old theories of the origin of pain. It is because it has found a new theory. All the former ones had explained suffering as the result of defect in the *creature*. Here, the bold view is advanced that it had its origin in a need felt by the Creator—the Divine need for love. With startling originality, and for the first time in history, this book declares that the

pains of earth were born in heaven, that they originated in the counsels beyond the veil. Let us stand before this Picture in the Great Gallery; it is one of the most striking, not only in all Scripture, but in all literature! It reveals in the foreground a day in heaven. It is a great day—a day of presentations. All quarters of the universe are represented. Each has sent up a deputy to stand before the throne of God. Looking round the vast assembly, the eye of the Almighty lights upon a strange figure; it is that of Satan. 'Where do *you* come from,' says the Almighty; 'what part of the universe has made *you* its representative?' Satan answers, 'I represent the earth—the length of it, the breadth of it.' 'Not in its whole extent,' says the Almighty; 'there is a man called Job down in the land of Uz who loves Me fervently.' 'Oh!' cries Satan, 'nobody loves you for *yourself*—not even Job! You have made it worth while to serve you. You have given to those who obey you houses and brethren and lands. You have crowned them with glory and honour; you have promised them long life and prosperity. Take away from Job the dowry he gets for loving you—take away the rich possessions that have re-

warded his fidelity, and he will curse you to your face!'

The Almighty accepts this criticism. Satan has put his hand upon a real weakness of the Hebrew race—its association of Divine love with temporal rewards. God tells Satan to go forth and create a set of new conditions—conditions unfavourable to Man's love of the Divine. He bids him put this man Job under a testing probation—a probation in which he will be denuded of every outward joy and made to experience the fact that a man may serve the Lord and get nothing in return. So Satan goes out from the presence of the Lord, and in the changing of Job's environment he constructs a unique figure in the Old Testament Gallery—a figure which has the stamp of a distinctively new conception. Job is the only man of the Old Gallery whose mission is simply to bear. All the other men of the group are men of action. Enoch had the wreath of immortality; but Enoch's life was a *walk* with God. Elijah had a chariot of fire; but Elijah was the *prophet* of fire. Noah rose above the floods of fortune; but Noah was an active shipbuilder. Abraham was highly blessed; but Abraham was the founder of a

kingdom. Moses communed with God on the Mount as a man talks with his friend; but Moses was the maker of practical laws. All these were great by reason of their *working*. But this man Job comes upon the scene to do nothing—simply to bear. To the eye of the beholder it does not appear that the bearing has any practical purpose. He is not weighted, as Isaac was, with the cares of a household. He is weighted seemingly for the sake of nobody, but just with a view to his own pain. What we see is a process of divestiture—and the reason is known only to the spectator. He comes to be dismantled. One by one the beautiful robes are taken off, until every thread of former majesty is gone, until the king becomes a pauper and the millionaire a beggar for bread. Let us follow the process.

First the outermost robe is removed—worldly wealth takes wings and vanishes away; the labour of the olive fails and the field supplies no meat. Job stands the test; his love for God wavers not. Then an inner robe is removed—the ties of home are broken by death. His had been a happy domestic circle—a circle of family reunions. They met at these reunions once a year in the rotation of

each son's birthday. We all know the increasing *sadness* of these gatherings—the sadness of hearing voices that are no longer there. Job had to bear this. Year by year the vacant chairs increased in prominence, and the touch of vanished hands became more frequent. Still he wavers not; no cry escapes his lips. Then a more inward robe still is taken—health breaks; bodily strength gives way. I call that a more inward privation, because it prevented him from recuperating. When a man's heart goes down, it may rise again if his body keeps *up;* but if his body falls too, the heart will *not* rise. That is what I understand our Lord to mean when He says, 'If the *salt* has lost its savour, wherewith shall *it* be salted!'—if the vital stream itself is low, what can restore joy! Still Job blanches not. No complaint falls from him. His deepest sense is that of acquiescence in the Divine will, 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord!'

Then comes the removal of a fourth garment—human sympathy. Job's friends visit him, and, in accordance with the Jewish view of suffering, they assume that he must be a special sinner. At first by gesture, and then by

words, they convey their impression that he has done something to deserve it. And now for the first time his great heart gives way. You have seen a cloud that has hovered overhead all the afternoon touched at last by a freezing vapour and burst forth in torrents. So is it with Job. He has borne up all through the day—borne poverty, bereavement, sickness; but, when the freezing vapour touches him, the fountains of the great deep are opened and the flood descends. He has endured calamity; but that his calamity should be made a sign of worthlessness is *too* much! The explosion is simply terrific; it sweeps all before it. Yet it is not illogical; there is a *method* in its gusts of passion. Let me try to gather up the threads of argument which the blast carries on its bosom. Let me endeavour to paraphrase the spirit of these remarkable utterances in which Job expresses his indignation at the theory of his friends.

'Tell me not,' he cries, 'that I have deserved it! Do not say that in any special sense I have incurred the displeasure of the Almighty! I know I have sinned after the manner of Adam's *race*. How shall a man be just before *God!*—if called to the bar of judgment, could

he answer for one, of a thousand, faults! But that is not what *you* mean. *You* want me to believe that I have been a *special* sinner, a sinner above the average. My life *refutes* the charge. Measured by the common standard, my record is pure. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the heart of the widow to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. When the poor heard, then they blessed me; when the eye saw, then it gave witness. I delivered the fatherless and the widow and him that had no helper. Mine integrity I will hold fast and never let it go; my heart will not reproach me as long as I live. But suppose it were otherwise, suppose I *were* the deep-dyed sinner you picture, is this pain the way to convict me! If your God wishes me to feel my sin, why does He send me a physical suffering and physical weakness which make it impossible for me to feel anything at all! Why does He seal up my transgressions in a bag—where they cannot be *seen!* Why does He sew mine iniquities in sackcloth—where they cannot be felt! Why does He break me with a tempest if He wants me to have a vivid consciousness of anything whatever! Does the sense of sin come

from mutilation, from curtailment, from paralysis of the nerves! Does it not come from expansion, from exaltation, from increasing nearness to God! If I am to abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes, it must be, not in the hour of depression, but in the hour of revelation—the hour when I meet with God. I cannot accept your explanation of my great and grievous pain.'

But now, in the light of this outcry, the question arises, Why do we speak of Job's *patience?* He has borne bravely three calamities—the three sent from God; why has he sunk before the one sent by Man? He has accepted penury, bereavement, sickness; why has he cried out at the mere suggestion that these are penalties; and why, in spite of that vociferation, has his name been handed down as a synonym for patience! He has stood the hurricane and the tempest; but he has been made to cry out by the lashing of a single wave! Does not the fact of being fretted by so weak a foe deprive him of all right to be the representative of those who wait for God?

I answer, No; and I feel sure that the answer will be echoed by the Great Gallery. I am convinced that, in the view of the artist,

the patience of Job is never so conspicuous as in his outcry. Not in spite of, but by reason of, that outcry has he earned his right to a place among those who wait for God. Why *did* Job cry out? Was it not in the *interest* of patience. Was it not patience that *made* him cry out. His friends wanted to *rob* him of his patience —to take away his power to *wait without a reason.* Is not that just the definition of intellectual patience—the power to trust when there is no light, the ability to possess one's soul in the absence of all explanation of that which afflicts it. Unless we grasp this thought, the personality of Job is meaningless—he is simply an impatient child. But if his impatience springs from the fact that his friends wish to rob him of his *patience,* if his outcry is caused by his desire to be *allowed* to wait for God, then, religiously and artistically, the whole Portrait is illuminated and the claim of Job to his traditional virtue receives triumphant vindication.

Now, the friends of Job are really in this position. They want to alter his attitude of *patience.* They say: 'It is not enough for you to believe that it will be all right *some* day.

You must be able to trace the *cause* of your calamity. You must be able to put your hand upon some dark deed of your past life, or'—as Elihu puts it—'upon some unspoken principle of evil which has not yet issued in a deed, but which God sees in the silence of your soul.' Put yourself in the place of Job under these circumstances. Imagine that you were passing through a season of bereavement. The light of your eyes has been extinguished, and you are sitting disconsolate in a silent room. Suddenly a solemn bell rings; and, draped in black, there enter three figures—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They take you by the hand and say: 'My friend, God is dealing with you in chastisement. You have been too fond of the world. You have been living for the hour. You have been giving to earthly things the honour which is due to His name. Therefore He has spoken to you in His anger; He has withered your gourd. Humble yourself, and confess your sin!' Would you not be disposed to answer: 'Am I *bound* to take such a view! In a world where so much seems arbitrary, where for a time "the tabernacles of robbers prosper," where the good are often clothed in sackcloth and the wicked wear the

purple robe, am I bound to believe that this is a chastisement to me! Will you not let me keep my *patience!* Will you not let me trust my God without a theory! Will you not let me believe that in some way unknown to me things are working together for good! Why do you deny me the privilege of the men who *wait* for God!'

Even such is the voice of *Job*. He utters a protest in favour of patience. He appeals from the God of his friends to his own God. He says, in the spirit of a Greater: 'My Father! behold, Thou comest to me in clouds! Life has been overcast for me; the hosannahs are hushed, the palm-leaves are withered, the friends of summer days have made their flight in the winter. Men want me to *trace* Thee, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ; who is he that smote thee?" But I will *not* trace Thee, "The cup which my Father has given me to drink, shall I not drink it!" I accept in the darkness the burden Thou hast laid upon me; I take it unexplained. I come to Thee in the night—the unvindicated night. I come in the cold that has no explanation, in the snow that is not accounted for. I accept Thee in Thy mean attire, in Thine unattractive raiment, in

Thy repulsive dress. I do not seek to comprehend Thee; I take Thee with Thy mystery. Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee, and believe that I keep Thy favour.'

But there is a second respect in which the patience of Job is vindicated by his outcry. Can there be *any* patience without a certain amount of inward outcry! If Job has ceased to 'pray for his friends'—in other words, if he has ceased to care what his friends think of him—where is there room for patience! Is it not just this presence of the inner outcry which distinguishes the patience of Christ from what St. John's Gospel calls 'the peace which the *world* gives'—Stoicism. The Stoic says: 'If you will only keep down your feelings, if you will only practise the restraining of the bird when it is about to fly, you will come in course of time to have *no* emotions; you will be able to walk in the funeral cortége, fearless, tearless, passionless.' Yes, and I would add, 'patienceless.' For, what you have lost in this case is really patience. You have ceased to *wait* for anything; you have given up the game. You see a man undergoing one of those little operations which flesh is heir to.

He never winces. 'What admirable nerve!' you say. And yet, in reality, the calmness comes from exactly the opposite cause. The nerve, so far from being admirable, is dead; the man has lost the necessity for *patience.*

There is a question which must often have occurred to an inquiring mind. Why is it that we Christians, to whom the patience of Christ is a watchword and the surrender of his will a glory, are yet eager to select that part of His life in which the outcry is most loud and the struggle most apparent? Why do we make our pilgrimage in crowds to the Garden of Gethsemane? Why is to us the dearest spot, the most sacrificial spot, precisely that place where he poured forth His soul with strong crying and tears? We could understand why men who admire patience should repair to the scene of the death of Socrates; but it seems a strange thing that they should always take their journey to a place of human outcry like the Garden of Gethsemane!

But the answer, I think, is clear. We go to Gethsemane in the *interest* of patience. We feel that the outcry is the proof of the sacrifice. Socrates has become deadened in the nerve that gives pain; therefore he has no outcry.

But the outcry of Jesus proves that He has *not* lost His nerve, not lost His youth, not lost His love of human things. It is easy to be crucified by the world if you have ceased to *love* the world. It is easy to be crucified by your friends if your friends are looked upon by you as simply so many flies to be brushed aside and forgotten. But the glory of Gethsemane is that life is still beautiful to Jesus—that, with all its sins and sorrows, it still keeps to Him its pristine glow—that the colour has *not* gone out of the flower, nor the song of the bird become silent, nor the freshness vanished from the breezes. The world is *yet* worth living in —bright and beautiful with possibilities, fair with promise, radiant with hope. *That* is what makes it so hard to be crucified by the sons of men; that is what gives value to the sacrifice. We measure the patience by the strength of the cry.

Job *also* had the spirit of youth. However dark his sky, he had not lost his sense of life's possibilities. Deep down in his heart there was the conviction that the world in which he suffered was an unnatural world. He felt that things ought not so to be, and that therefore

they would not *always* so be. Clear through the night his voice kept ringing: 'I know that my Vindicator liveth, and that He shall stand at the last upon the earth; and, though the process of destruction penetrate even beneath the skin, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another!' These are the words of hope, not despair. They show that the nerve is *not* dead, that the love of life is not extinguished, that the spirit of youth remains. If patience implies an outcry, it is because it implies an out*look*. It refrains from tracing the way, but none the less does it believe in the goal. So long as a man keeps his love, he will keep his capacity for pain; but he will also keep his freedom from despair. Where love is, there is no despair. The wind may be raging fierce and cold around us, there may be no star in our night and no present rest in our journey —but if *love* be not quenched, the ground for hope is still abiding. The gate of egress may be unseen, the avenue of outlook may be undetected, but already beyond the tombstone there will gleam the Garden, and above the blood-stained heights of Calvary there will glitter the sunlit peaks of Olivet.

LORD, help me to keep my *love!* Whatever else I lose, may I never lose *that!* Though all the lights go out from my life, let not *this* torch be extinguished! There is a peace which comes by the *death* of patience—by ceasing any longer to wait or to expect. There is a peace which is *not* patience, because it *looks* for nothing, longs for nothing, prays for nothing—a peace which is painless because it is numb, and is free from struggle because it is dead. I would not have that gift, O my Father! I have passed through the autumn woods and heard no waving of the leaves, not because there was no wind to blow, but because there was no sap to nourish. I would not have *that* gift, O my Father! That is the peace of the grave. But Thy peace is the peace of the ocean. It is the calm that holds depths beneath it. It is not the rest of lifelessness, but the rest of balance. Thy patience is the patience not of spentness, but of expectancy; it rests 'in hope.' Bring me that peace of Thine, O God! Bring me the peace of pulsation, the calm of courage, the endurance that springs from energy! Bring me the fortitude of fervour, the repose through inner radiance, the

tenacity that is born of trust! Bring me the silence that comes from serenity, the gentleness that is bred of joy, the quiet that has sprung from quickened faith! When I hear *Thee* in the whirlwind, there will be a great calm!

# CHAPTER VII

## ISHMAEL THE OUTCAST

In the lands of the Western world there is a type that has always been greatly admired—the unconventional man. The West is the atmosphere of freedom. It is the home of progress, the nursery of the new. To step from the line of routine, to initiate a fresh idea, to be recognised as in some sense out of the common, has been in the West a prevalent object of ambition. But in the lands of the East it has been otherwise. Here, the greatest glory is to be time-worn, antiquated, unrepaired. Enter any national gallery of the old world, you will find many noble qualities represented. But there is one type of man whom you will *not* find represented—the man who diverges from the traditions of the past. All the figures of these galleries repudiate independence. None wishes to be deemed original, none wants to be thought an innovator on former days. Confucius tells you he is merely a re-

storer. Lâo-tsze tells you he is following the old 'fixed way.' Buddha tells you he is but one of *many* incarnations. China worships her ancestors, India reverences her caste; and with both the reason is the same—the sense that the old is better than the new and that the path of wisdom must ever lie upon the lines traced by our fathers.

But there is one exception to this rule of the ancient world. It occurs in that one gallery which is *not* national—the Portraits of Israel. Here, as elsewhere in the East, there is a reverence for the past; the Garden of Eden lies in the background, and the times of old are the times of glory. But here, unlike those other galleries lit by the rising sun, there is a place prepared for divergent forms. I say 'a place prepared.' It is not merely that the men outside the caste have their names recorded—*India* would have done that. The peculiarity of the Hebrew Gallery is not that it has recorded the names of its rejected portraits; it lies in the fact that it has admitted portraits which have been rejected elsewhere. It has made room for those diverging forms which the artists of neighbouring lands have cast as rubbish to the void. To drop all meta-

phor, Israel has from the very outset provided a place for the pariah—has opened a door of entrance to the man whom she has herself turned out. We speak of Israel as a 'peculiar' nation. So she is; and the most peculiar thing about her is just her tolerance of peculiarities not her own. We are apt to think of this as an exclusive attribute of Gospel times. It is not; the Gospel is its flower, but you will find this tolerance at the *root*. Christianity was not a revolution; it was a culmination, a climax. It brought to the surface what had long been slumbering underground. It was to Judaism what the autumn is to the spring—a manifestor, a discloser. You will see its germs in Genesis, its examples in Exodus, its precepts in the Prophets. Not without reason in the plan of Providence was the land of Judah chosen as the theatre of that Gospel whose province it is to gather the waifs and strays of humanity. No other soil was so prepared for such a seed.

As the representative of this outlawed class, I have selected a very early portrait—the portrait of Ishmael. He is the Great Gallery's first pariah, its first outcast from society. *Cain* was not an outcast from society; there was no

society in his day; *his* banishment was from the presence of the Lord. But Ishmael was born in an age of culture, in a scene of culture. He came into the world when the world—the Hebrew world, at least—had begun to be social. Brotherhood was in the air, family life was in the air. A section of mankind had formed the bold and grand design of transforming the idea of empire into the idea of a household. They had begun to call the king their 'father.' That is the root idea of patriarchal government—that the names of sovereign and subject should be replaced by the names of father and son. To be banished from such a society was ostracism indeed. To any man who had breathed the patriarchal atmosphere the expulsion from that atmosphere was death in the desert. It was to exchange the home for the highway, the brotherhood of man for the breath of misanthropy. No modern condition of exile can represent the exile of a man put out of the patriarchal caste. Modern exile is a change of land, but it need not be a loss of the old country's sympathy. Expulsion from the patriarchal fold was not necessarily a change of land at all; the outcast could live within sight of his former home—

is it not written of Ishmael himself, 'He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.' But the sting lay in the fact that the brotherhood itself was broken. The banishment was not one of space; it was one of spirit. It was a separation from sympathy, an isolation from interest. The man might live in the presence of his brethren, but he must live as a stranger to them. He had become a mere individual. He had no family tie, no blood of kinship. He was divided from his comrades of the past by something more impassable than any wall—a thought of the mind.

What brought Ishmael into this exile? What has given him the distinction of being in the Great Gallery the first portrait of a pariah? As in nearly all cases of social ostracism, he owes it partly to his misfortune and partly to his fault. For one thing, he had the misfortune—for an Eastern—of being an unconventional man. He is described under the simile of a wild ass. In colloquial English that would be a term of contempt; in literary Hebrew it is a term of admiration. The idea is that of impetuous brilliancy. It depicts a man of noble impulses unable to restrain these impulses, rushing to realise his goal with won-

derful, majestic, but unreasoning speed. He has nothing but his individual convictions to support him. The spirit of the age is at variance with *his* spirit. His views are not the common views. His opinions are deemed eccentric; they place him in an isolated position, in a position of general antagonism, which the narrative indicates by the prophecy 'His hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him.' But to that position he adheres. In an age when private judgment brought ostracism, and when ostracism meant banishment from all sympathy, he bravely faced the storm. He raised his testimony against the united testimony. He set up the authority of his individual conscience in opposition to the use and wont of the whole community. His figure in the Gallery is the figure of a man in fight with all the world—outnumbered but unsubdued, proscribed but protesting still.

What was that individual conviction for which Ishmael strove? In the abstract, I think, it was something which was right. He had been born to great possessions—Messianic possessions. His mother Hagar was an Egyptian slave who had fled to the tent of Abraham

and had become the handmaid to his wife Sarah. Sarah was childless, but she retained unbroken her empire over the heart of Abraham. Abraham was eager to have an heir, but he never dreamed of repudiating his first marriage tie. He had preferred to contract an additional marriage. At the suggestion of Sarah herself he had espoused the slave Hagar; and the fruit of their union was Ishmael. But here came the sting of the position. Hagar, though a wife, was still a slave. He had not wed her to set her free, but to make her the medium in bringing an heir to *Sarah*. Ishmael was not to stand for *her* son, but for Sarah's son. Abraham was never more loyal to Sarah than in his union with Hagar. It was for Sarah he formed the union; it was for Sarah he desired posterity. When Ishmael was born he was made, officially, the child of Sarah. His real mother was denied all right to her maternity. She was only an instrument for the transmission of the kingdom. She must go back from her marriage to her drudgery, to her slavery. She must resume her menial duties to Sarah. Her seeming elevation to dignity had made it all the more needful that she should be reminded of her continued

lowliness. The prospective destiny of her son Ishmael might mislead her, might tend to make her forget that she was still a bondwoman. That fact must be recalled to her remembrance. Ishmael could only be the heir of Sarah on the supposition that Hagar was nobody—a creature without right, a thing of goods and chattels. By word and deed the fact of her nothingness must daily, hourly, be brought home to the heart of this Egyptian.

In this atmosphere the boy Ishmael grew. He was the heir to a kingdom; and in the court of his future kingdom his mother was a down-trodden domestic slave. Was it conceivable that the heart of the boy should not burn with indignation! Measured by contemporaneous law, there was nothing unjust in the incongruity. But the unconventional man never measures anything by what is contemporaneous; he judges everything by the end of the world and how it will look *then*. Ishmael saw his actual mother in the position of a menial to his adopted mother. He saw her subjected to daily indignities. He heard in private her vehement complaints. He listened to her assertions of a right to be equal to Sarah, of her claim to be treated as the wife

of Abraham. Is it surprising that in his deepest soul he should have uttered a protest against the spirit of his age! He was a youth of noble impulses; the proof is, that he had won the heart of his father Abraham—the most chivalrous of men. Can we wonder that the depths of his nature should have risen up in antagonism to the customs of his land and the usages of his time!

By and by something nappened—the unexpected happened. A real heir was born to Sarah—the child Isaac appeared. And now Ishmael was supplanted; all his hopes were withered. I do not think these hopes had all been selfish; I doubt not the youth had said to himself, 'When I become head of the state, I will set my mother free.' So far as he was concerned, that prospect was gone now. He should have considered, however, that, with the birth of the real heir, Sarah had no longer the same motive for keeping Hagar a slave; he should have remembered the native generosity of Abraham. He did not remember it; and this, I think, was the fault added to his misfortune. He seems to have thrown off the mask which had hitherto concealed his irritation. His tone became mocking, satirical.

What form his satire took, I cannot tell. Perhaps he sneered at the puny, delicate child on whom was to devolve the kingdom—for I have elsewhere expressed the opinion that the Isaac of the Gallery is an invalid. Perhaps he suggested that the birth was an imposture—that the child was not that of Sarah. Whatever he said was said recklessly, publicly. He used no prudence; he made no effort to hide his feelings. He selected the most prominent occasions for his invectives; he spoke where he would be overheard. I think he spoke with a view to be overheard. I believe he was tired of his equivocal position, of his mother's equivocal position; he felt humiliated by eating as a dependant the bread of which he had been born to be the dispenser. He preferred a life of independent poverty to a life of luxurious vassalage; he panted to be free.

And he got his desire. The wrath of Sarah was kindled. She had borne acts of disobedience, she had overlooked disregard of her authority, but she could not condone a slight upon her son. She clamoured for the dismissal of the Egyptian and her boy; she bore down the unwillingness of her husband. Woman as she was, she was the ruling power in the

house of Abraham. Abraham might sway the *clan,* but Sarah swayed *him.* In striking contrast to the other women of the East, this woman rises to our view as the dominant power in church and state—for church and state were then one. She rises to our view as the arbiter of national destinies, as the tribunal from which there can be no appeal. Abraham sinks before her, Mesopotamia sinks before her; her will is law. She waves her hand and says, 'Go!' and Hagar and Ishmael issue forth from the patriarchal home, to return no more. All that Abraham can do is to make secret provision for their wanderings. Silently he provides the bread and the water and sends out mother and son from the heat of Sarah's wrath into the heat of Beersheba's desert.

When they reach that desert their supply of water is exhausted. Why had Abraham not foreseen this? I think he had foreseen it. If I read rightly the meaning of the Gallery, Abraham knew that in the wilderness of Beersheba there was a well of water—that, if once they arrived there, they would find supply without limit. Yet Hagar and Ishmael came and saw not the well. Why? Simply because their nerves were unstrung. When our

minds are disturbed, we miss the things that are lying at our feet. In all days, as in the days of the Gospel demoniacs, there is a blindness which comes from being possessed by violent passions. It had come to Hagar and Ishmael. Their minds were on fire with anger; their hearts were palpitating with excitement. They were too absorbed within, to see anything without. When the water in the bottle was spent, their strength was spent too; they beheld nothing but the barren sand. The mother bore up better than the son; here again the Gallery shows its respect for patriarchal womanhood! Ishmael was not yet inured to fatigue like Hagar. He had been nurtured daintily, dandled luxuriously; he took badly to the desert; at the prospect of death by thirst, he swooned away.

But Hagar betook herself to prayer—so I read the narrative. The Egyptian mind was peculiarly religious. It lived more in another world than in this. Its finest architecture was lavished on its tombs; its finest literature is 'The Book of the Dead.' Hagar partook deeply of the spirit of her land. In her hour of emergency she retired within herself to commune with God. It was not the God of Israel

she communed with; it was her own God. But, says the narrative, He *answered* her. There is no finer proof of the cosmopolitan spirit of the patriarchal age—the prayer of an outcast from Israel is answered by the God of Egypt! The answer comes, as all such answers come, in the form of an inward peace—a peace which passed understanding, which defied explanation, but which, just on that account, carried an assurance of succour. For the present, such a peace was all that was required. It sent no supernatural vision, because that was not needed. The means of refuge lay within the limits of the natural. The well was there, had always been there. What was wanted was a mental calm adequate to the recognition of it. The peace of Divine communion *brought* that. It enabled Hagar to see, to use her faculties of natural observation; as the narrative finely puts it, 'God opened her eyes.' When she emerged from her communion, she found the old place changed. The old horror was gone—the horror of prospective thirst. She saw some vegetable product that indicated the presence of water. I do not know that she found water all at once; Divine help does not dispense with searching. But the inward peace

put her on the right track for searching. It let her see where to go. It led her to fountains of living water and wiped all tears from her eyes—or rather it wiped all tears from her eyes so that she saw the living fountains.

But the grand thing—to Hagar, to Ishmael, to ourselves, was the moral bearing of the fact. It had a historical significance. It made the voice of God say, in effect, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' It declared that God had a place for the pariah—a place for the lands outside the line of Abraham. It proclaimed that the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac was still the God of Egypt and the God of Hagar. It announced that, while He had blessed the seed of the patriarch, He had also a blessing for the nations outside. The melting of that desert cloud from the eyes of Hagar was a beam of the infinite fatherhood, of the universal brotherhood—a premonition of the truth that God is larger than all our creeds and higher than all our theories. It was Hagar, not Ishmael, that had the vision—and there lies its significance. Ishmael had, after all, the blood of Abraham in his veins; Hagar belonged to a foreign faith and a foreign soil. The God who communed with a woman not

included in the orthodox line was already proclaiming to the world that 'He is not far from any one of us.'

And here the narrative virtually takes leave of Ishmael—merely stating that he rose to be a mighty hunter, that he allied himself with a daughter of Egypt, and that he transmitted an empire to his posterity. He disappears from view as rapidly as one of the steeds of his own Arabian desert. Only once in the record of Genesis do we hear his name again. It is at the end of long years, when the autumn of his life has come. But it is on an occasion so memorable and so significant that it seems a fitting place to say farewell. It is at the funeral of Abraham. There Ishmael and Isaac meet hand to hand in the presence of death. It is a strange meeting. The pariah and the prince, the man who had lost his kingdom and the man who had supplanted him, the wild undomesticated huntsman and the life immersed in the cares of the home—these at last walk side by side in the fellowship of grief. From the heart of Ishmael all bitterness is gone. In the presence of death he forgets everything but the memories of love. He remembers Abraham as the father who had loved him—who had never

ceased to love him; the hour of his expulsion from home is drowned in that bottle of water which was provided for his sustenance. He remembers Isaac as the little delicate child who had come in his way without knowing it and who ought not to have experienced his anger. Thus death softens all our asperities. It is one of those touches of universal nature which make the whole world kin. It reveals the common frailty, and there is nothing which unites us like a sense of the common frailty. Ishmael was divided from Isaac by the thought of the mountain; they were joined again by the sight of the valley. They were constrained to walk together by the falling of the evening shadows.

Millenniums have passed since that day, and the old order has given place to the new; yet Ishmael and Isaac are walking together still. The revolving centuries have again brought them to evening-time. The empires which they founded have both been shattered. That Mohammedan power of which Ishmael was the progenitor has lost its political influence; that Jewish sceptre which claims its dawn in Isaac is wielded among the nations no more. Yet, in the shadows, in the common

ebb of their fortunes, Ishmael and Isaac still walk side by side. Bereft alike of their political significance, stript alike of their physical glories, Islam and Israel are living still. They have both survived the death of their temporal power. The empire of the Saracen has passed away, the dominion of the Jew has ceased; but the *influence* of the Saracen is a present and potent force, and the influence of the Jew is greater than ever before. In a new world these old forms remain—survivals of a culture which has lost its environment but which yet refuses to die. The child of the bondwoman and the child who received the inheritance of Abraham are still found walking hand-in-hand, contemplating that former glory which has been laid in the dust of death.

I BLESS Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast a place for the outcast—for the man who has gone over the line. I thank Thee that he who cometh unto Thee is in no wise cast out, even though he comes by an unwonted way. I praise Thee that Thou hast a revelation for the Hagars of the world—for those whom many have deemed in Egyptian darkness. En-

able me to realise that even in their desert there are springs! I often speak of the wells of Baca—the wells for Thy covenanted people; but I forget the wells of Beersheba which are prepared for the men of the wilderness. I forget that for them also Thou hast revealing messages, openings of the inner eye. Help me to remember it, O Lord! Help me to remember that *my* dividing lines are not *Thy* dividing lines! Help me to remember that Thou hast a star which leads to Bethlehem those who have missed the morning sun! Help me to remember that Thou hast songs of Christian glory not included in the choir of the prophets! Help me, above all, to remember that the springs which Thine angel discloses are often just in the places which I have pronounced dry parched land! Increase my hope for man, my sense of man's possibilities! In the hour when I despair of my brother let me see what Thou seest, let me hear what Thou hearest—the rushing of underground waters, the promise of a life that shall make the desert glad! The desert will to me be already glad when I learn that in Hagar's wilderness there are secret wells seen by Thee.

# CHAPTER VIII

## LOT THE LINGERER

THE figure of Lot has already met us in travelling through the life of Abraham. But in a book of representative men he cannot be dismissed with an accidental interview. To be seen fairly, a man should be seen by his own light. His portrait should be taken when he is standing alone. A face of average comeliness will look very plain when it is placed beside one of extreme beauty; yet, when seen apart, it may have a charm of its own. Lot makes an excellent foil to Abraham. Abraham's is a face of extreme beauty, and any ordinary countenance will suffer if placed beside it. But it does not follow that Lot himself might not contrast favourably with many on his own plane. In point of fact he did exhibit a certain beauty of aspect when he was not in the presence of Abraham. When he stands in the midst of Sodom, he looks so remarkably well that his name has been handed down to

posterity as one of the world's superior souls; he is called 'just Lot.' Let us consider, then, the man in himself. What is his place among representative men? What class does he stand for amid the various orders of humanity? That is the one question, the crucial question. Everything else about him is accidental; but the point of Lot's contact with a common phase of human nature, the sphere in which he meets with an experience repeated in all time—this is the abiding thing, this is the permanent element in the man.

There are two words in the Bible narrative which seem to me to express in one brief sentence the place of Lot amid the phases of humanity—'Lot lingered.' I would say his distinctive position is that of the man who falls behind in the march of civilisation. He does not go back; he never could be classed among the lapsed masses. His characteristic is, that at a certain point of the road he stands still and allows his comrades to move in advance of him. Lord Macaulay, in one of his Essays, raises the problem, Why has the navy of Spain declined? He solves it by the answer that it has not declined, but that the increase of other navies has left it in the rear. Whether this be

the solution as regards Spain, I cannot tell; but it is the answer which may be given to all who put the same question regarding the tardiness of that ship of life which we call Lot. It is behind the others, not because it has lost speed, but because the others have gained speed. Lot is in many respects like the Chinese Empire; he has not fallen back into barbarism, he has simply failed to keep pace with civilisation. He stands where he was. In a metaphorical sense he has become what his wife is said to have become in a physical sense —a pillar of salt. He has been crystallised into an inert mass which marks only one stage of a journey.

This man was, originally, marching abreast with humanity. He had joined the band of Abraham—that first missionary band among the sons of men. He had attached himself to the cause of those whose object was to carry the blessings of culture into lands of darkness and to bear the lamp of knowledge into scenes of ignorance. It was a stream of high civilisation, which was seeking to irrigate the nations. Nothing could have been more fair than Lot's morning; it promised a fine afternoon. But for him there has come no afternoon; his day is

still but beginning. The afternoon has come to others. It has come to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, but not to him; he stands yet where he first stood—on the confines of that missionary march which he had been expected to pursue.

Now, there is nothing unusual in this. It is quite a common thing to see a whole community of men left behind by a stream of civilisation; you cannot pass through any city without seeing it, you cannot pass from the city to the country without observing it. In every age of culture there are to be seen those who have lingered behind, who remain yet in the primitive condition of ages long ago. But I wish to direct attention to a new light which the case of Lot throws upon these. The common saying is that the men left behind are the physically unfit. Those who pursue the march are thought of as the strong, the active, the able-bodied; they who have lingered on the road are taken to have been the weak, the frail, the lives destitute of animal vigour. But in this case of Lot, it is entirely the reverse. Lot is left behind, not because he has too little of the physical, but because he has too much. He is left behind because his animal nature is stronger than that of his comrades. Abraham and those

who follow him are animated by a sacrificial impulse; they survive by a crucifying of the flesh. Lot is left behind by reason of a *fleshly* impulse and an inability to resist that impulse. He is not driven to the wall; he believes he is driving others to the wall. He looks upon himself as the really progressive man of the company, the only man who is truly making his way in the world. In his own eyes he is the object of natural selection, the chosen favourite of fortune. It is by and in the exercise of a physical passion that this man is interrupted in the race of life.

What was this physical passion? It was avarice. It was the glitter of a great possession that arrested the steps of Lot and chained him to the place for evermore. He saw a fertile field, and he said, 'I will make this mine; I will settle down here.' Every race has, in my opinion, a special sin. Rome has her pride; Greece has her voluptuousness; Babylon has her extravagance. I think the special sin of Israel was avarice. I think avarice is the sin attributed to the man in the Garden of Eden—the primeval Adam covets a tree not his own. The trait becomes hereditary; it is repeated all down the stream. We see

Cain envying a brother's prosperity. We see Jacob aspiring to another's birthright. We see Esau selling his soul for a mess of pottage. We see Achan hiding a Babylonian garment. We see Gehazi accepting unlawful gold. We see Dives—the parabolic representative of the national sin—allowing a starving beggar nothing but the crumbs from his table. When Paul says 'the love of money is the root of all evil,' he has his eye upon his own land. The native of another land might have given another root; the Roman might have stigmatised pride, or the Greek sensuality. But to Paul the Jew the root of evil was the sin most contagious to the nation—the love of money, the spirit of avarice.

Now, this was the sin which has caused Lot to linger. He has been made stationary by avarice. It is through a grasping spirit that he has been shunted from the line of progress. That grasping spirit was developed, not by the experience of want, but by the hour of prosperity. As long as the missionary band of Abraham was in struggle, it remained in unity. In the day of storm and stress it revealed no discrepancy. Abraham and Lot walked together with seemingly equal steps as long as

it was shadow; it was the dawn that displayed their inequality. While their life was a common struggle in the wilderness they had but one interest—the desire to maintain life. But when the storm and stress subsided, when the sun of prosperity began to shine, when the vision of golden fields flashed before the eye with the promise of coming harvests, when the desert broke forth into singing and the wilderness blossomed as the rose, then it was that the difference of the men appeared. It was in prosperity that the lives parted asunder. It is prosperity that reveals our power of being generous, or our want of that power. Poverty makes the open heart and the narrow heart indistinguishable; but the rising sun of fortune shows their contrasted colours. Is it not written of the wheat and the tares, 'Let both grow together until the harvest'—the time of prosperous ingathering. In the time of undergroundness, in the day of struggling growth, wheat and tares are undiscriminated; but when the harvest is come, when the buried life emerges, when the field is waving with yellow corn and plenty crowns the year, then the wheat and the tares are severed, and Lot and Abraham assume their separate spheres.

Now, I want just to remark parenthetically that many a lingerer on the road of culture owes his backward position to the flush of prosperity rather than the blast of adversity. Those who occupy the rear are indebted for that place more frequently to absorption in physical pleasure than to the experience of physical weakness. Some, doubtless, have been crushed out of the way—not, I think, the majority. The majority have been rather the violent than the men *taken* by violence; they are those who have grasped with too much insistence at a present object and ignored the things of the future. The main cause of arrest in human development has been avarice for the object of the hour. Lot is not an exceptional case; he is a fair specimen of his class. Arrested development has more root in moral obliquity than either in intellectual stupidity or in physical incapacity. The larger number of its victims have become its victims by yielding to the animal impulse which prompts to seize the present moment in preference to all other moments. They have been dominated by a malady which is distinctly moral; they have succumbed to avarice; and avarice is a form of sin.

It is my opinion, indeed, that, if keenly analysed, every sin wil be found to be some form of avarice. All self-indulgence, all debauchery, all licentiousness, all jealousy—even love's jealousy, are but the forms of the one passion—the desire for personal monopoly. If this passion were exercised to the full, I conceive it would constitute what is called 'the sin against the Holy Ghost.' If the fruit of the Spirit be the love of humanity, the absence of the Spirit must be the exclusive love of self. Perhaps no human soul has ever reached that absolute stage of privation. I think we are saved from committing the sin against the Holy Ghost by the fact that no man's avarice is complete, that even the most loveless soul has a little corner in its heart kept vacant and kept green for somebody.

But, while all sin is a form of avarice, the name of that vice is usually limited to a particular phase of the desire for monopoly—the coveting of material possessions. This is the form which it has always assumed in the Jewish economy. We have taken Lot as its representative and Lot's lingering as its typical result. And now there arises a question. Why is it that this man, type as he is of his

nation's besetting sin, and condemned through that sin to an arrest of development, has yet come down to posterity with the epithet of 'just'? He is lauded in spite of his lingering, he is commended notwithstanding his covetousness. Why? Should we not have expected unqualified opprobrium! Whence this tone of respect? Whence this ascription of justice to a man of avarice?

I answer, because there is an avarice which is compatible with justice and because Lot belongs to that particular school of avarice. In the sphere of worldly possession I recognise three classes of men—the generous, the avariciously fraudulent, and the avariciously just. The generous man is eager to spend; the avariciously fraudulent man will sink all principle for the sake of gain; the avariciously just man is bent on being rich within the range of principle. To this last order belongs Lot. You would never class him in the list of thieves and robbers. He would die sooner than steal. His is a thoroughly legal mind. His motto is, 'Render unto every man his due.' Nothing will induce him to fall below the claims of justice. But he would be equally pained to go beyond them. He will give to no one less than

his due, but to no one will he give more. He might be described characteristically as the man who never gives discount. Justice is his watchword, but it is justice pure and simple, never sinking into fraud but never rising into generosity. Twenty shillings in the pound is his ideal—not nineteen, not twenty-one. He will do what is right, but not what is kind, not what is overflowing. His verdict is, 'To the law and to the testimony'; if he has agreed with you for a penny a day, you will not prevail on him to add a single farthing.

The Epistle to the Hebrews says that in the upper sanctuary there is a place set apart for 'the spirits of just men made perfect'—which I understand to mean 'the spirits of just men made generous.' That is the place in the future heaven which I would appoint for Lot. He was on earth a just man; he never transgressed the principles of justice by *deficiency*. But he ought to have transgressed them by *excess*. It was well to give no less than his neighbour's due; but he should have been able to give more. The perfection of the heavenly state requires that justice should be supplemented by generosity. The state of the avariciously just in the present world is high in compari-

son with the state of the avariciously fraudulent. Yet I should say that the latter will be more easy to convert than the former. A fraudulent man knows that he is wrong; but it is very difficult to convince a man of bare justice that he is anything less than a saint. Like the Pharisee in the temple, he will give a catalogue of all the debts which he has duly paid, and will thank God that he is superior to other men. Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables* has introduced a very striking portrait which gives expression in an exaggerated form to the difficulty here indicated. I allude to the portrait of the constable Jabert. This man has always been scrupulous for observing and enforcing the exact letter of the law. The rigid fulfilment of this undeviating routine has become a conscience with him. One day he is betrayed into an act of leniency towards a prisoner. His remorse for that leniency is so great that he commits suicide. The pain of transgressing the law of justice by performing a generous deed has been too much for him; it has been as great as would have been the pain of transgressing the law of justice by performing a deed of meanness. He has felt himself as much degraded by his act of mag-

nanimity as if he had perpetrated an act of baseness. The incident is only an exaggerated illustration of the self-complacency which belongs to the avariciously just.

The crucial instance of Lot's character is his appropriation of the lion's share in the partition of territory with Abraham. The incident illustrates both his justice and his ungenerosity. He did not take the land by force. He was told by Abraham to make his choice of a locality; he selected the finest spot. Legally, he might easily say, 'I have done no wrong.' Measured by law, he certainly had not; measured by grace, he had. I would describe his choice of the lion's share as, not illegal but ungracious. It was within the rights of law, but it was outside the limits of generosity. Why had Abraham given him a choice at all? Because Lot's servants had been a torment to Abraham, had created strife and wrangling within the band. Lot should have remembered this, and should have moderated his desires. He should have remembered also that Abraham's was the mission field and that the mission field ever deserves the best. Lot was choosing land for his own benefit; Abraham was choosing land for the benefit of the king-

dom of God. All this made Lot's choice ungraceful, ungracious. The selfishness of the choice has brought its own penalty—stagnation. The failure of Lot did not come from the territory in which he settled down; it came from the fact that he did settle down. If Lot had made his possession a mission field, it would have thriven; but, instead of adapting it to culture, he adapted himself to its want of culture. Any piece of ground, under these circumstances, would have become barren ground—Abraham's would as much as Lot's. It is the man that makes the place. Personality is a stronger force than environment; Abraham would have immortalised the Plain of Sodom, Lot would have left Mount Moriah in its native obscurity. Lot chose the rich plain for the reason that the ox chooses the rich pasture, and he has had the ox's reward; he is browsing there still.

And yet, I should be sorry to deny this man his due amount of credit, nay, his due amount of sympathy. Let us remember that for such a man it was a very arduous thing to be just, and that therefore it was a very great victory to achieve that goal. For a generous nature it is easy to avoid falling short of justice; the

temptation is, to exceed justice. But for one by nature avaricious, it is a brave thing to be just. Honesty, with such a man, would need to be *more* than a policy; it would require to be a passion. The man who is too covetous to be generous and who is yet too just to be fraudulent must possess the principle of honesty in an extraordinary degree of development. From this point of view I would give my sanction to the epithet by which Lot has descended to posterity. Let him take it—he is entitled to it. A more sounding epithet would have been untrue. We could not describe him as 'loving Lot,' 'tender Lot,' 'magnanimous Lot'; but 'just Lot' is a phrase which truly expresses his character. He has earned the right to it by reason of the very temptation which assailed him.

The truth is, this man occupies morally that very position which he holds socially; he is the man who lingers. Socially, he is neither among the barbarians nor abreast of the highest culture: he is stationary at a particular point. Morally, he is neither a very bad man nor a very good man; he is a correct man. He stands in the golden mean between baseness and generosity—the plain of justice.

Behind him is the valley of humiliation, in front of him is the mount of self-forgetfulness; he belongs to neither. He stoops not to the low, he soars not to the high; he keeps the level plain. He is the middle man, the just man. He has paid his way, though he has paid no other's way. His life has been self-contained, but it has been also self-restraining.

If I were asked to place an inscription on the grave of Lot which would be congruous with the facts of his life, I would write the words, 'A man worthy of better things.' There are some things which are done so well that we are disappointed they are not done better. Many a schoolboy gives us dissatisfaction in the very points where he is strong; we say, 'A lad of such parts should take a higher place.' Even thus does Lot impress us. He dwells in Sodom, but he is far *above* Sodom. In the midst of an environment of iniquity, he never descends. His *family* descends; his innermost surroundings become unfavourable to purity; but Lot himself stands firm—he bows not to temptation. A man who could thus resist going down might well be expected to go up. A man who could withstand temptation to descend into the pit should have been winged

with aspiration to ascend into the heavens. We feel, in looking at him, as we feel in looking at some unfinished building. The foundation is there, the pillars are there, the various stories are there; but the roof is wanting. The man is far above the ground, but he is not pointing to the sky. He has surmounted the dust, but he has not reached the gold. He has fulfilled the law, but he has not arrived at love. He is so high that he ought to have been higher.

O THOU whose nature and whose name is Love, let me not pause short of *Thee!* Let me not linger on the march of my pilgrimage at any spot less beautiful than Love! Let me not be content to say, 'I have kept the law—I have not struck, I have not robbed, I have not slain!' Let me not be satisfied to think, 'I have been, in all my dealings, just; from what a height do I look down on Sodom!' Nay, my Father, but let me rather say, 'From what a height dost *Thou* look down on *me!*' Instead of fixing my eyes on the valley which I have surmounted, let me lift up mine eyes to the hills which I have yet to climb! Teach me that all my safety comes from looking up—

not down! Make me humble by the sight of Thy hills, O Lord! What time my heart is lifted up with the pride of its vanished yesterday, bring me to the foot of Thy Mount of Beatitudes! Let me see the distance between my soul and Jesus! Give me a glimpse of the Promised Land to cure me of the pride of present possession! Give me a taste of the grapes of Eshcol to disenchant me of the fruits of Sodom! Give me a strain of the songs of Zion to make me weary of my cherished music! Waft me a perfume of the Rose of Sharon to wean me from the flowers which my hands have gathered! Send me a breath of Thy mountain air to teach me the narrowness of what I call my freedom! Lend me one throb of Thy pulse of love to tell me the poverty of my reign of law! I shall cease to linger on the Plain of Sodom when my eyes have rested on the Heights of Calvary.

# CHAPTER IX

## MELCHISEDEK THE UNCANONICAL

CUVIER says that if you give him a single bone of any animal he will tell you exactly what was the structure of that animal. I think some such aid as this would often be of immense value to the biographer. There are cases in which he is required to construct an entire life out of nothing more than a fragment. One of these instances occurs on the very threshold of the Bible history. There appears in the Great Gallery a deeply-veiled figure—a face and form delineated in colours so pale that the spectators have failed to take the impression. The portrait seems designed to picture one seen through a mist. Everything about it is obscure, dim, unrevealing. Yet this figure is more thronged than many of those with clearer forms. Crowds gather round it; hundreds speculate about it. It is the centre of wonder, the source of controversy, the ground of enthusiasm. Men of all ages come to it.

Abraham stands before it as a reverent spectator. A psalmist of the Exile stands before it in genuine admiration. Above all, one of the latest of the New Testament seers—the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews—has given an exalted interpretation of its character and aim.

This figure, so attractive by its very obscurity, is Melchisedek. I propose to join the crowd of spectators who are standing in front of him. I will disregard speculation, I will keep to the dim record of fact. There is only a fragment to work upon; but that fragment is beyond measure striking. It is more precious than all the gold of Israel, for the simple reason that it is quite distinct from the gold of Israel. It is a metal new to the country—rare in any country. It is a fragment wonderfully unconventional—bespeaking an order of things which is foreign to the scene, foreign to the age in which the fragment dwells. Melchisedek is one of the most original figures in the Bible. He cannot be accounted for by genealogy. The writer to the Hebrews does not scruple to say that he is the most unique figure in the Gallery, with the exception of the Son of Man. That is a startling statement;

but I think it is borne out by the facts. In the case of Melchisedek the most striking fact is not the character of the man, but the discovery that the Bible has *delineated* such a man. Nowhere has the Old Testament been more inspired than in giving us this picture. Nowhere has the Jew reached so high in charity, nowhere has he gone down so deep in sympathy, nowhere has he broadened so wide in liberality. The thing to consider before all others is not the man, but his environment. It is the last environment in which we should have expected such a man, the last environment in which we should have expected the Jew to delineate such a man. The force of the figure lies in its background; its mystery is its mean surroundings. Let us look at this.

If there was one race which the Jew detested, it was the race of Ham; if there was one family of that race which he specially detested, it was the Canaanite. The Canaanite was his earliest enemy; upon the Canaanite fell his earliest curse. He was associated, to the Jewish mind, with all that was bad, all that was profane, all that was worthy to be exterminated. The man of Canaan was to ancient Israel what the man of Galilee was to

later Israel—the dweller in a region which sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. It was the most unlikely thing in the world that to the eye of the Jew anything good should come out of Canaan. He was commissioned to expel the Canaanite—to expel him relentlessly, root and branch, with fire and sword. His warrant for this expulsion was his sense of the Canaanite's badness. It was his *interest* to think badly of this enemy; the thought lent weight to his arm, and gave justification to his blows. It was in the nature of things that he should say of Canaan what was afterwards said of Galilee, 'Search and see, for out of this race ariseth no prophet!'

And yet, how stands the case? It is from the hated race of Ham, it is from the specially hated race of the Canaanites, that the artist of the Early Gallery has selected one of his brightest models. This Hebrew hand has painted the image of a spotless hero amongst the natives of this land of sin and death. Melchisedek was a Canaanite. His birthplace was uncanonical. He belonged to that race which was deemed the enemy of the people of God, and which the people of God were commanded to cast out. It was here—in this en-

vironment of horror and desolation—that according to the ancient narrative there grew the loveliest flower that ever made the desert glad.

In that little village of Salem which in the far-off days was to become the great city of Jerusalem, there lived and reigned a chief of wonderfully despotic power. I say *'wonderfully* despotic,' for no carnal eye would have seen the source of his despotism. He had no outward weapons, no standing army, no strong fortifications. He had never engaged in war, never raised the standard against a foe —perhaps never had a foe against whom to raise it. His empire had grown noiselessly. So noiselessly had it grown that men called him 'The King of Peace.' I should think that was the reason why his capital came to be called Salem; it took its character from the character of its king. A man ruling without weapons was in that day a miracle—a far more wonderful spectacle than would have been the sight of the most triumphant warrior. Men could understand how physical force could preserve order; but that order should be preserved without struggle, without up-

roar, without the visible exercise of authority, this was a unique thing.

Let us proceed further. What gave this man such a marvellous power? What enabled this unarmed mortal to stand in the midst of a rude population and sway them without a blow? It was their sense of his personal sanctity. He was called not only the King of Peace, but the King of Righteousness. And it was their sense of his righteousness that made them peaceable to his sway. The only instance I know the least analogous to the picture is the spectacle afforded by Mediæval Europe of the unarmed Pontiff directing the physical forces of the world. But even this latter Portrait has been painted by *friendly* hands; that of Melchisedek has been drawn by the hand of an enemy. Who is it that describes the personal sanctity of this Canaanite? It is his deadly foe. How great must have been that sanctity which could elicit so high a testimony from so unlikely a quarter! If this man's purity of life could dominate the hostile house of Abraham, it is little wonder that his name has been preserved as a desert flower. He did dominate the hostile house of Abraham. Read the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. You will see

there a remarkable meeting. Abraham and Melchisedek stand face to face. Abraham represents the culture that was coming in; Melchisedek represents the culture that was going out. Yet, for the time being, Abraham is the inferior of Melchisedek. Abraham is the man of war; Melchisedek is the man of peace. Abraham represents earth; Melchisedek is the High Priest of heaven. Abraham dispenses to Melchisedek a temporal donation; Melchisedek bestows on Abraham a Divine blessing. Nay, I am convinced that the blessing which Melchisedek bestowed on Abraham was nothing less than ordination itself. I am convinced that the Patriarchal House of Israel received its first priestly impress from the touch and from the blessing of this venerable and venerated scion of a disappearing culture and of a race that was ready to die.

Where did Melchisedek get that priesthood which he was certainly credited with possessing and which he probably bestowed? That is the next question which solicits our attention. And to this, I think, the narrative itself gives us the answer. I understand that answer to be, 'Melchisedek was the earliest man of his class, and therefore was not ordained with

hands.' The first priest of God in the history of the world *must* have come from a house not made with hands. He must have derived his ordination, not from apostolic touch, but from popular suffrage. Imagine that in a somewhat rude and unconventional community there lived a man of singularly pure and upright life—in manners gentle, in piety fervent, in counsel wise, in prayer powerful, in speech eloquent. Imagine that from far and near the peasants gathered on the hills to hear him and listened breathlessly to his thoughts of God. Imagine that he went in and out among the people inquiring as to their welfare and ministering to their need. Imagine that in their sickness he came to pray for them and that by a singular coincidence those for whom he prayed recovered. Would not these men, however far behind in goodness, receive an extraordinary impression of the power of goodness! Would they not also receive an impression of this man's special power and canonise him in their hearts as a medium for their communion with God! I have taken a case which has come within my own knowledge. But let us suppose that it occurred, not in modern times, but in an age when ecclesiastical in-

stitutions were as yet non-existent, would not such a man be an ecclesiastic without orders, a Churchman without a Church, a priest without the laying on of hands! Such the first priest must have been; and the type of the first priest is Melchisedek.

It is in this light that we must understand the remarkable words of the writer to the Hebrews when he speaks of Melchisedek as 'without father, without mother, without descent.' What he means is that his *priesthood* was without father or mother or descent. What he says is this: 'This High Priest of God was uncanonical. He derived his office from no touch of episcopal hand, from no human genealogy. He was the first of his class; he *made* his class. He has lighted the torch of priesthood for his successors; but *God* lighted it for *him*. The generations that followed him can claim him as their ecclesiastical father; but he himself had no ecclesiastical father; he got his life from God. His priesthood came from within. It was his *sanctity* that made him reverenced. Abraham received his blessing from him, his ordination from him, not because he was the scion of a long sacred line, but because he was the per-

sonification of righteousness, the emblem of peace. The tribute paid to him was the tribute paid to holiness. He derived his sacred character from no carnal authority, but from "the power of an endless life"—a life without beginning of days or close of years—the Life of the Eternal.'

I have sought thus to paraphrase the striking passage in Hebrews. The thought clearly seems to be that the chain of canonicity has its origin in the *un*canonical—in the spontaneous and unruled dictates of the individual heart. The writer declares that the beginning of every ecclesiastical chain is something not ecclesiastical—something human. He tells us that the Churches of the old world each began in a human soul—in the heart of a single solitary man. Within this holy temple all other temples had their foundation; within this sacred shrine all other shrines were lighted. In Melchisedek, within the precincts of one heart, was laid the nucleus of all that sanctity which attached to the patriarchal line. The priesthood of a Jacob, the priesthood of an Isaac, the priesthood of an Abraham, were all *derived;* but the priesthood of Melchise-

dek was all his own—it came from the purity of his inmost soul.

There are, I think, three orders of priesthood in the Bible—the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian; and at the beginning of each dispensation there stands an individual life whose ordination is not made with hands. The origin of the patriarchal dispensation is the holiness of one man—the man Melchisedek. The origin of the Jewish dispensation is the holiness of one man—the man who got his fire direct from the burning bush—the man Moses. The origin of the Christian dispensation is, from the human side, the holiness of one man—the Man Christ Jesus.

I should not have dared to make this last comparison if the writer to the Hebrews had not made it before me. But he has. He says that Christ was made a priest 'after the manner of Melchisedek.' I prefer the translation 'after the manner' to 'after the order.' The very peculiarity of Melchisedek is that he belongs to *no* order. He did not derive his priesthood from that hereditary descent which in patriarchal times was its common source; he was, in this respect, 'without father or mother.' He was the earliest of his kind.

Aaron got his priesthood from the consecrated hand of Moses; Melchisedek got his from no hand. The difference between Aaron and Melchisedek lay precisely in this, that Aaron belonged to an order, Melchisedek did not. The point of comparison, therefore, between Melchisedek and Christ is just the uncanonical manner of their ordination. Looking at the matter from the human side, and abstracting the attention from theological prepossessions, there is nothing to my mind more remarkable than the uncanonical aspect of the Son of Man. He has founded a Church—the greatest priesthood this world has ever seen. He has built a visible House of God—a structure which has filled the largest space in modern history and occupied the centre of modern civilisation. Yet He Himself stands *not* in a house made with hands. The ordination He has given is an ordination which personally He does not possess. The ecclesiastical function has been made canonical by Him; but He Himself has no canonical orders. He has given what He did not get, imparted what He did not receive. We have obtained the flower from His hand, but we have never seen Him pluck it from any garden. He has not

been presented with the rose; He has created it; He has obtained it 'after the manner of Melchisedek.'

I am deeply impressed with the prominence which the Evangelists have given to this feature of the Son of Man—His want of canonicity. It is to my mind the thing which of all others they are most eager to suggest. As a rule, they are chiefly anxious to tell their story; but, if there is anything they desire to tell besides their story, it is of the absence of canonicity in the Priesthood of Jesus. We see the child in the temple performing an act of self-consecration to the service of His Father. We see the youth on the banks of Jordan recognised as independent of the baptism He received. We see the man on the path of beneficence pointing the labouring and the heavy-laden, not to the consolation of the Scriptures, not to the counsel of the Hierarchy, not to the cleansing power of the Jewish sacrifices, but to His own underived strength: 'Come unto *Me!*' We see the life as it nears its close repair to no human helps or fountains of earthly preparation, but illumine itself with a glory all its own: 'as He *prayed,* the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His face did

shine.' He gave the impression of one having 'life in Himself'—life not derived from other lives. He gave the impression of one who was lighting the world—not of one whom the world was lighting. He gave the impression of one who was creating a fountain—not of a thirsty traveller who had been refreshed by a stream. He was not made sacred by the touch of sacred things; He touched common things, and they became sacred. He glorified objects which were canonically ignoble; He made suffering holy, He made patience heroic, He made the cross divine. Unconsecrated, He became the source of consecration; He was a priest 'after the manner of Melchisedek.'

I have dwelt upon this Gospel picture because it illustrates the Old Testament picture —is meant to illustrate that picture. In the absence of any direct biography of Melchisedek, the best description we can give of his priesthood is to say, It was like the ministry of Jesus. That is what the writer to the Hebrews says, and it conveys a whole volume. What, now, is the effect of this portrait of Melchisedek as reflected in the life of Christ? What is its historical significance, its abiding lesson? Is it not simply this, that in the last result

the most important of all factors is the individual man? Catholic and Protestant alike, if they go back far enough, will arrive at a time when a man's Church is in his own house and in his own soul. They will come to a time when a man's glory shines not from without but from within. St. John in Patmos beheld a city of the future in which there was no temple. But, if religion is to culminate in the absence of a temple, its culmination will be only like its beginning. The first man in the garden of the Lord is ever a Melchisedek. Like the primeval Adam, he stands alone. He is without father or mother or descent. He has received no ordination from the past; he has to make his own paradise. There are no stones in his wilderness which he can make bread. He is the heir to no sacraments, the inheritor of no promises. The desert cannot make him glad; he has to gladden the desert. He is the first rose of summer, and therefore, as truly as the last rose, he is alone. The last rose has lost her companions; but the first has never had companions, and that is equal loneliness. The solitude of Melchisedek is the solitude of the Son of Man—the solitude of one who is born before his time and who has seen a vision

his generation cannot see. Melchisedek burst into flower when the Canaanite was still in the land.

I THANK Thee, O Father, that Thou hast ever planted Thy first rose ere the Canaanite has been expelled. I thank Thee that Thou hast sown the wheat before Thou hast plucked up the tares. I thank Thee that Thou hast sent Thy primrose into my early year. There are Melchisedeks in the heart while the heart is still only a 'land of the Canaanites.' My aspirations come sooner than my deeds. Long before I am good I have longings after goodness. Thou *acceptest* me for these longings, O my God! Thou waitest not for the full corn; Thou tarriest not for the autumn ripeness. Thou comest to the one opening bud in my heart—the one Melchisedek in my Canaan. Thou comest to my first rose—my primrose. Thou callest my life a garden while it is yet a wilderness; I am justified by faith—by mere aspiration, ere I have done a single good work. The Canaanites are all within me still; the old habits are there, the old temptations are there. But there is a single Melchisedek

among them—the wish of my heart for better things. Thou hast accepted that solitary flower and called it righteousness. Thou hast beheld my one star and called it Bethlehem. Thou hast seen my one thread of gold and called it Christ. Thou hast heard the faint beating of my heart and called it Calvary. Thou hast received Melchisedek in spite of his environment; in the dark and in the cold Thou hast received him, in the midst of the Canaanites Thou hast received him. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

# CHAPTER X

## BALAAM THE INCONSISTENT

THERE are few figures in the Gallery which make one feel so near to modern times as the portrait of Balaam. It is placed in a foreign environment, in a culture long outgrown, in a scene remote from Western experience. It professes to delineate the days of Israel's desert —that period which, of all others, carries us furthest away from present civilisation. Yet, in defiance of these surroundings, the picture speaks to us as a modern man. The desert becomes a city; the plains of Mesopotamia assume the aspect of the streets of London; the distance of the years is annulled, and we stand in the presence of our contemporaries. In a thousand of these contemporaries we meet the form of Balaam. There he stands—undimmed by the mists of antiquity, uncrushed by the crumbling of empires and the dethroning of dynasties! Three thousand years at least have swept over him in vain. Myriad changes of

vesture have signalised the human drama since he stood on the arena of the wilderness; but this man has assumed each new costume, has donned each fresh fashion, has worn each mantle of every age, and remains still his inner self, his original self—one of those forms which make us realise that there is an element in humanity which is the same in all centuries and identical in all climes.

I have taken Balaam as the type of the inconsistent man. He belongs to that widest of all classes—the men of two worlds. The two worlds, however, are Heaven and Earth—not Heaven and Hell. He wavers between two principles; but the principles between which he wavers are not good and evil. It would be more correct to say that he is a man struggling betwixt the old and the new. We have, in my opinion, a wrong view of the character of Balaam. We think of him as a backslider from the faith of Moses, as a man tempted by worldly ambition to desert the God of Israel. A more unjust view cannot be conceived. A man standing on a doorstep may be either coming into the house or going out. Whether he is coming in or going out must be determined by his previous footsteps. Balaam is un-

questionably on the doorstep; but he is the man coming *in—entering* the precincts of the God of Israel. His temptation is not the temptation to retreat; it is the temptation to advance—to become a better man. The interruption he experiences, the struggle he experiences, is caused by the breaking of light upon darkness—not by the impinging of darkness upon light. Unless we appreciate this we cannot, I think, do justice to the character of Balaam. Inconsistent he certainly is; but it is the inconsistency, not of one who descends to the moral plain after summering on the top of the mountain, but of one who after long dwelling on the plain begins in later years to *climb* the mountain. That he ever reached the summit I do not know; I think the narrative leaves him climbing. But he is climbing—not grovelling; and it is in this light we must view him if we would see the full proportions of the man.

I think I shall be most true to the delineation of Balaam in the Great Gallery if I place the man in an environment which will be at once equivalent and modern—in other words, if I give the story a parabolic dress. I will try to put ideas in the place of names. If we prac-

tised such a system more, I think we should find that history repeats itself, and that the life which we relegate to ancient times is very much the life in which at *present* we live and move. It is the scenery that makes the difference; the actors are always the same. I will clothe in a modern garb the story of this ancient man.

Once in the olden time, there dwelt in Pethor, a town of Mesopotamia on the banks of the Euphrates, a very distinguished religious preacher named Balaam. He was possessed of extraordinary gifts—splendid imagination, graphic descriptive power, and a wonderful faculty of dramatic representation. These qualities had been fostered by the religion of the country to which he ministered —the land of Moab. The religion of Moab was the worship of a God of Nature. By whatever name or names He was called, this was His characteristic in the eyes of that people. The Moabite worshipped the physically beautiful. He adored the objects of the eye. He luxuriated in all beauty that was sensuous. He invested female loveliness with a sacramental value—not without exposing religion to licentious temptations. He delighted, above

all things, in the vision of mountains. It seemed to him that God's metropolis was there. Wherever he saw physical height, he uncovered his head in adoration. His worship was essentially an aesthetic culture, an admiration of nature's symmetry. In this atmosphere, as I take it, Balaam had been nursed, from this atmosphere he had received his first breath of inspiration—his poetry. It was at the shrine of Moab his imagination had been lighted. Here had been kindled his sense of the physically sublime. Here had been stimulated his architectural power of constructing lofty imagery. Here had been evoked his facility for graphic description and his faculty for artistic delineation. In all these respects Balaam was the child of Moab.

But latterly there had come into his life a second influence. I say 'a second' rather than 'another.' It did not expel the first, but was added to it as a fresh impulse. There had come to the ears of Balaam tidings of a strange people who had emerged from Egypt into the wilderness and were growing in power and greatness day by day. He had heard of their conception of God, and it was to him a novel conception. It was that of a God whose main

feature was, not beauty, not symmetry, not outward splendour, but righteousness. It was the idea of a Being who desired that they who worshipped Him should worship love, truth, holiness—that His votaries should be composed of the men who served their brother man, who sustained the sanctity of home, who were upright in business, stainless in morals, reliable in testimony. The very novelty took hold of Balaam—the admiration of the internal was such a new thing! He was influenced by the Hebrew movement, but he hid the fact in his heart. He knew that in high places this revival of the religious life was not popular. Its origin was democratic. It was the product of revolution, of rebellion against the authority of Egypt. Kings looked with jealousy upon it; those who favoured it were likely to get no promotion. Balaam had been born and bred a conservative. His interests lay not with the masses but with the classes. His influence as a preacher would be shaken if he allied himself with what was deemed not respectable. Prudence counselled him to keep quiet; yet, in the secret hours he often asked himself if this new movement did not supply the missing link in the religious life.

By and by there came to him one of those moments of crisis which reveal a man to himself, which force him to examine himself. The office of court-preacher in the royal house of Moab became vacant. King Balak looked round to see if there was anywhere a man of pulpit gifts capable of supporting the dignity of the state religion. His eye lighted on Balaam. He sent a deputation to confer with him. They came to the preacher of Pethor, and offered him the tempting charge. They said: 'The king wants a man of culture, of imagination, of brilliant secular gifts. He wants a man whose preaching will attract so as to be a counterpoise. He wants him to strike a key-note which shall be a trump of war against that gloomy view of God which is being propagated by these desert revivalists. Will you come, and blow that trumpet?'

Then Balaam began to question himself more seriously. Was he in a position to accept such an office? Had he a right to denounce the revivalists of the desert! Was not their God in a sense already *his* God! Had He not gained possession of a greater part of his mind than he cared to acknowledge! Was there not something within him which told him that he

owed allegiance to more than beauty, more than symmetry, more than the laws of art—that there was a law more potent than any natural force, more binding than any aesthetic sympathy! And so Balaam declined the call. It was accompanied by conditions which jarred upon him, which rose against one side of his nature. With a noble self-denial he put the temptation aside; he said: 'I will not go.'

Then the offer was repeated—in a grander form, with more imposing advantages. A larger deputation came, composed of men of higher position; and with increased pertinacity and enlarged promises the call was pressed on Balaam. The salary was doubled; the privileges were multiplied; the attendant honours were augmented tenfold. Balaam was shaken; he was dazzled by the prospect. It is here more than anywhere else that the inconsistency of his character appears. If a man refuses on the ground of conscience a post worth a thousand a year, he is not justified in reconsidering the matter if the same post is offered at ten thousand. With Balaam it ought not to have been a money question at all; his conscience should have been equally imperative over a mite and over a million. But then, the

man had two natures; conscience had not conquered *all* the land. On one side of his being he was still a child of Moab—a lover of the physical. The result was that Moab and Israel began to strive within him—the flesh against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh. The outer man cried: 'Take the gold; make yourself comfortable, fashionable, famous!' the inner said: 'Do not; palter not with your conscience; let no honours tempt you from the path of honesty!'

Balaam, then, like Paul in different circumstances, was in a strait betwixt two. He had a desire to depart and be with the king of Moab; but duty bade him remain. He could not decide at the moment; he required time to think over it. He asked the deputation to stay at his house overnight. They consented. What follows has perplexed all the critics—the Lower as much as the Higher. Hundreds of devout Christians have sought a solution which would free them from a literal interpretation. As this is a matter not for learning but for imagination, I venture to lift my voice with those of the 'chiefest apostles,' and to offer with all diffidence a humble contribution

to the efforts that have been made to clear the mystery.

Balaam went to bed with a tumult in his brain. To go or not to go—that was the question. He laid down his head upon the pillow listening to a dialogue within his own soul—an argument fiercely contested and vehemently maintained. At last nature became exhausted, and he fell asleep; but his waking problem became the problem of his dreams. In Numbers xxii. 20, we read 'God came to Balaam at night.' I understand the words 'at night' to mean 'in a dream'; and I think that all the sequel of the chapter, up to verse 35, is a description of this dream. He thought that the God of Israel stood before him and said, 'If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them.' Then he thought that the morning had come and that, in company with the august deputation, he was already on his way. And as he travelled in his dream with a heart still full of misgiving, it seemed to him that he was everywhere beset with barriers. Suddenly, the ass on which he rode shied and halted. Balaam lashed her, spurred her, goaded her; but it was all in vain. Neither the menace of the voice nor the stimulus of

the whip were of any avail. Ultimately she fell on the ground and began to utter words of expostulation. There are no wonders in dreamland. Balaam is not surprised at the conversational powers of the naturally dumb animal. He seems more impressed with her *argument* than with her articulation. He grows calmer and begins to look round; and then, all at once, the obstacle is revealed to him. There, right in the centre of his path, stands a figure with a drawn sword whom he identifies as God's angel and before whom he prostrates himself. The angel warns him that his course is a dangerous one. Balaam offers to return. The angel suggests a compromise. Balaam is to go, but he is to go without any promise on *his* part. He is to accept the vacant living on the condition that he will only censure the people of Israel when his conscience points to any particular act in which they deserve censure—so I understand the nature of the compact.

With the angel's disappearance Balaam awoke and found that the real morning was come. The various voices of the night had been the various voices of his own mind. But of these, the voice of the angel remained para-

mount. It seemed to offer a prospect of making the best of both worlds. Was it not likely that, after all, occasions would arise in which Balaam might at once be true to his conscience and acceptable to Moab! Was it not almost certain that the children of Israel would sometimes make a slip that called for denunciation! Was it not *absolutely* certain that at least isolated individuals of the band would be guilty of trespasses and misdemeanours which would enable him to point a moral that would be dear to the heart of Balak! Had he not found at last a way by which he could both keep his conscience clear and raise his fortunes high! He resolved that he would go.

Now, it will be acknowledged that this compromise put Balaam morally in a very dangerous position. It was practically the position of a preacher whose parochial success was proportionate to the amount of sin in the district. The ordinary case of the religious minister is just the reverse; *he* is deemed successful in proportion as he can give a good report. But when a minister is told that his income will rise with the increase of sin in his parish, he is brought perilously near to a great

temptation—the temptation of desiring that sin may abound. Balaam was placed in circumstances where his material interests came into conflict with his spiritual interests. His material interest was Israel's sin; his spiritual interest was Israel's holiness. He was the auditor of two simultaneous and opposing voices; the one called on him to contemplate the sea's buried dead, the other bade him count its treasured pearls. Which of these voices was to win?

I think I must answer that the victory remained with the last. I know this is not the common view. We have come to think of Balaam as a man who came to curse the people of God, but who, by an involuntary process, was made to utter words of blessing. I submit that such is not the view suggested by the narrative. Let any one read the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Numbers and say if he thinks these magnificent words were intended to describe the absence of premeditation. But, indeed, there is no room for argument on this point. The narrative tells us in express terms that there was premeditation—that the addresses of the preacher were not even extempore, much less involuntary. It

tells us that before delivering his sermons he had moments of communion with God. What he said in public was the result of what he thought in private. Many a cleric has entered his study with a determination to please Moab, and has emerged from it with a resolve to bless Israel. I have known more than one man who has sat down to write a life of Christ from an exclusively human standpoint. In each case, he has said to himself, 'I must be abreast of the time; I must explain everything by the causes known to Moab; I must avoid all reference to the supernatural—otherwise I shall be deemed behind the age.' But as he proceeds in his task, he has found that the Christ he proposes to construct would be more supernatural than the one he seeks to avoid. He has found that to attribute the Christ of the Gospels to natural causes would be to proclaim a *real* violation of law, a miracle compared to which the healing of the demoniacs would be pure *science;* and he has been compelled, in the very defence of his scientific reputation, to assume the presence of an influence not measurable by Moabitic lines.

Now, this is a parabolic description of the

case of Balaam. We may call him an inconsistent man; but his inconsistency appears, not in the pulpit, but in the study. He enters the study with a naturalistic bias. He is dazzled by the court of Balak, impressed with the honour of being selected as the representative of the age. He would like, if possible, to keep up that reputation—to interpret all texts on the lines of the school of Moab. But, as he reads, he is in communion with a larger influence; and ever more and more that influence becomes the dominant one. He looks at the field of thought from various standpoints, surveys it from different altitudes. But, from whatever height he beholds it, he is borne back to the same conclusion—that the fruits of this field have been matured by no earthly sun. Ever as he gazes, the star of Jacob grows clearer and clearer. Ever as he ponders, the destiny of this tribe of the desert shines forth with greater splendour. Ever as he meditates, the origin of this people seems more unique, more inexplicable, more separate from the *world's* origins. When Balaam comes out of his study, so far as intellectual conviction is concerned, he has made up his mind—has decided for the kingdom of God.

Yet Balaam did not outwardly join the kingdom of God. He refused to denounce it; but he would not become a member. Balak heaped him with obloquy and dismissed him; yet he left not the Church of his fathers. There must have been something pertinaciously loyal about the man—to stick to the old ship when he knew it was doomed and when its crew had treated him with scorn! Balaam parted from the king, but he never abandoned his allegiance. Before parting he gave his sovereign a word of counsel which has handed down his name to infamy, but which, I think, has been misinterpreted in its motive. What I understand him to have said is this: 'These men of Israel can never be hurt by the word of *others;* if they are ever to be injured it must be by their own hand. I propose, O king, a better test of their power than *you* have offered. You want to see if they can stand your blows; I would ask you to see if they can stand your blandishments. You seek to kill them by floods; can you kill them by flowers! Try them with your temptations; ply them with the allurements, with the seductions, of your city life! If they can resist these they have proved their right to a

unique place in history; if they succumb they will suffer greater loss than the denunciations of any prophet could ever bring.'

This advice, as I have said, has tarnished the name of Balaam with historical infamy. Yet, I think, unjustly. I believe he spoke in good faith, and with no malign intent, towards Israel. The test he proposed was a sound one. It is the counterpart of that which in the great drama the Almighty accepts for Job. In Job's case the problem was, can man resist the temptations of *suffering?*—in Israel's case the problem was, can man resist the temptations of *pleasure?* I cannot see that the latter is a whit less legitimate than the former. I think Balaam both believed and hoped that Israel would stand the test, would emerge from the trial victorious. What motive had he for wishing the contrary! He had no longer any official connection with Balak; he had been dismissed from his service. Did not all his interest lie in the hope that his refusal to curse the children of Israel would be vindicated by the stream of events, and that the far-off glory which he predicted for their race would be already prefigured in the eyes of the king of Moab!

The rest of the narrative I can only piece together by the threads of imagination. But it seems to me that the order of events was this: Balaam went back to his home. Moab continued her aggressive policy towards the people of God, and formed a league with Midian to bar their way. Israel had no recourse but war. She was bound for the land of Canaan, and her way to Canaan was blocked. If the barrier could not be removed by favour, it must be shattered by force. Israel advanced to battle. She was small among the nations; but her strength lay in her religious faith. Midian too desired such a strength. On her was to fall the brunt of the battle, and she wanted spiritual support. She thought of Balaam. If that great preacher would stand in her ranks to stimulate the living, to comfort the dying, she believed she would prevail. Balaam is summoned from his retreat. He obeys. He joins the ranks that are fighting in the cause of his former master, Balak. Not as a soldier does he join, but as a priest, as a consoler. In doing so he displayed no inconsistency with his latest conviction; who needs religious consolation so much as those in the *wrong!* Balaam fell on the field of battle—

in the capacity, as I think, not of a warrior but of a priest. He died helping the enemies of Israel—but the help he gave was such as a man may give to those with whom he agrees not. In his last act he has been numbered among the transgressors by the reckoning of history; he is not included in the visible communion of the people of God. Yet he remains on the roll of inspired men, yea, of God's inspired men. His words are authoritative. His sayings are proverbial; they have become part of Holy Writ; they are quoted; they are sung. Israel is as proud of them as of the utterances of Isaiah. There is no stronger testimony to the truth that the ways of heaven are wider than the paths of earth and that the inspiration of God is larger than the creeds of Man.

O THOU who hast never left Thyself without a witness in any land, let me not narrow the range of Thy Spirit! Let me not say that Thy voice can only reach the members of the Church Visible! Teach me that Thou hast psalmists even in Moab, seers even in Midian! Often have I marvelled at the Balaams of this world. I have seen gifted souls, inspired souls,

who have *not* been numbered with Thy congregation; I have heard strains of Divine melody which have not come from Thy sanctuary; I have read thoughts of sublime beauty which have not issued from Thy tabernacle; I have found deeds of sacrificial love which have not radiated from Thy visible altar—and I have wondered. Let me wonder no more! Thou art larger than Thy tabernacle, Thou art wider than Thine altar. Thou travellest on the wings of the morning. In the uttermost parts of the sea I find Thee. If I say of any spot 'Surely here the darkness will cover me!' behind the curtain I meet *Thee!* We do not shut Thee out by shutting the gates on Thee; Thou canst enter through closed doors. Thy rays are Röntgen rays; they pass through my fleshly barriers, they detect my secret wounds. Do not let me call my brother an infidel because he joins not Thine outward Church; Thy Church can join *him!* Thou hast recognised hundreds on the road to Emmaus who have not recognised *Thee.* Thou hast seen Nathanaels under the fig-tree who never knew *Thou* wert passing by. Increase my charity, O God!

# CHAPTER XI

## AARON THE VACILLATING

THERE is one type of man who, I think, has not always received the sympathy he deserves —the man who has narrowly missed the goal. Of course, those who have narrowly missed and those who have missed by a million of miles are historically in the same position; they are all included under the general name —failures. Yet, while historically it may be true that 'a miss is as good as a mile,' it is, morally, *not* true. The man who has lost the goal by a final slip of the foot is in a vastly different position from the man who has never come within sight of it. I should be disposed to divide humanity into three classes—the man of success, the man of failure, and the man of shortcoming. I would place the last between the other two. He comprehends by far the largest class among the runners of the race of life. Perfect success is not reached by many; absolute failure is the lot of few; but

the narrow missing of the mark is the fate of the large majority of men. Take a survey of those around you. What is their mental average? It is not greatness, it is not smallness, it is not even middle-sizedness; it is shortcoming. It is the missing of the mark by a hair's-breadth. It is the absence of one little fragment of the alabaster box preventing the structure from being pieced together. Our common impression of the men and women around us is not that the chain is brass, but that there is a link wanting to the gold.

Now, I am very glad that this wide class has not been left without a representative in the Great Gallery. The man chosen as its representative is Aaron. If I were asked to define his place in the Gallery, I should say he is the man who narrowly missed the mark, who came in second. I do not know any portrait of the group that is so suggestive of this quality. It is not, for example, suggested by the portraits of Cain and Esau. These are the delineations of men who were not in the race, whose significance lay in the fact that they were impediments to the running. But Aaron was a real competitor. He was a man who bade fair to be the leader of his time. He did

not stand to his brother Moses in the same relation that Cain held to Abel, or Esau to Jacob. He had a common cause with Moses. He burned as eagerly for the emancipation of his people; originally, he seems to have burned more eagerly. If any spectator had looked upon the two brothers before the day of the emancipation and considered their comparative promise of success, he would, I think, have given the preference to Aaron. Aaron was the elder. That itself was little; it had become a proverbial saying that in the Hebrew race the elder should serve the younger. But in this case there seemed to lie with Aaron the maturity of *mind* as well as years. As the brothers stand before us, we are struck with the contrast between them; and it is Aaron who seems to have the higher ground. Moses is shy; Aaron is bold. Moses is reticent; Aaron is outspoken. Moses halts in utterance; Aaron is a man of eloquence. Moses is meek and prone to wait the tide of events; Aaron is an impetuous spirit and tends to rush into action. Moses meditates forty years in the desert of Midian; Aaron in that same desert seems to have been doing powerful service in

winning the favour of the neighbouring chiefs.

And yet the fact remains that Moses was the chosen man, the man selected to be the leader of the rising age. Why is this? The common answer is, because he was by nature the weaker vessel, and because God selects the weaker vessel. But where do you *find* that doctrine—that the principle of Divine selection is the natural weakness of the object? You refer me to St. Paul—'God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.' Yes, 'the weak things of the *world*'—the things which the *world* deems weak. That is a very different statement from 'the things which God deems weak.' The truth is, the principle of Divine selection is, and has always been, identical with the principle of natural selection—the survival of the fittest. The men who are chosen by the Great Gallery to carry on the kingdom of God are chosen on distinctly Darwinian grounds—not because they are weak but because they are strong. If Abel is preferred to Cain, it is because he is a fitter man than Cain; if Jacob is preferred to Esau, it is because he is a stronger personality than Esau. Weakness

can never be the ground of a selection, either Divine or human. There *is* a paradox in the choice of the Bible; but it does not lie where it is supposed to lie. It lies in the fact that the Bible has a different estimate of strength from that made by the secular eye. The secular eye sees the things on the surface; it measures the power of work by the power of manifestation. But the Bible looks below. It considers, not the power of manifestation, but the power of restraint. It judges a man more by his stillness than by his outcry, more by his words unsaid than by his words spoken. To the eye of the Bible it is a ruler's *self-repression* that makes him great, that proves him strong. The thing it desiderates is not fighting power but waiting power. It deems most valuable what the world calls weak. The qualities it appreciates are just the unbrilliant qualities—the attributes held to be not heroic. It prefers patience to petulance, temperance to temper, vigilance to violence, latent discretion to loud display. All this is expressed in the aphorism, 'Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'

We may conclude, then, that Moses was selected for a higher post than Aaron, not be-

cause he was a weaker vessel, but because he was a stronger one. Where lay the difference in their strength? It lay within—in the innermost region of all—in the power of will. The Bible's test of strength is tenacity of will. To be immovable like the great mountains, to be steadfast as the solid rocks, is ever its deepest aspiration. The things of nature which it admires are the things which it can think of as tenacious. The tree whose leaf 'shall not wither,' the city which 'shall never be moved,' the sun that 'shall no more go down,' the well of water 'springing up eternally,' the rainbow which shall be a sign 'while the earth remaineth'—these are among its fondest fancies. And all these are to the Bible but the symbols of a deeper tenacity still—the endurance of a human heart, the steadfastness of a human purpose.

Now, the crucial point of difference between Moses and Aaron was this tenacity of purpose. All other contrasts, from the Gallery's point of view, are irrelevant. Aaron had every quality fitted for a great leader but one —tenacity of purpose. He was eloquent, shrewd, persuasive, pleasing in manner and address, endowed with the gifts that win

popularity; but he was vacillating. He was one of the kind whom we meet every day—vehement but variable. Men were drawn to him magnetically, but they had no security that the alliance would be lasting. He was perfectly sincere; he spoke the genuine sentiment which he entertained at the moment. But there was no guarantee that he would retain this sentiment at the end of the hour. There is a type of character which is described as slow but sure; Aaron might be portrayed as quick but uncertain. I have always regarded him as the Simon Peter of the Old Testament. No two men separated by long centuries are more alike. Both were lovable; both were outspoken; both were rapid in resolution; both received a call in advance of their brethren; both performed deeds of the most jealous service; and both on certain occasions were singularly untrue to their first impulse.

I will add one parallel more—both were the founders of a ministry. Of Aaron, as of Peter, it was virtually said, 'On this rock I will build my church.' Aaron, like Peter, received the key of a new dispensation; he was placed as head pastor over the congregation of liberated Israel; church and state were, for

the first time, separated in *thought*. One naturally asks, Why should Aaron have been fit for the church when he was not fit for the state? If he had not the qualities of a rock for politics, why should he have been credited with these qualities for the pastorate? It is not suggested by the narrative that Moses promoted him to the priesthood in ignorance of his weak point. On the contrary, the most striking exhibition of that weakness occurred previous to his ordination. The incident may be briefly stated. Moses went up to the solitudes of Mount Sinai to commune with the God of Israel. Aaron was left in charge of the multitude on the plain. But the absence of the one man made the multitude lonely. Loneliness might help the religion of *Moses;* but it did harm to theirs. They craved a symbol, an image, something to represent God. *Moses* had been that symbol, that image, that representative. But Moses was gone. He had disappeared in the mountain mists; he might never return. They came to Aaron to ask a sign—a visible monument of the Divine Presence. Aaron demurred. The crowd grew clamorous. They passed from request into murmur, from murmur into mutiny. Aaron

yielded. He told them to bring their gold earrings, and from these combined treasures he constructed the image of a young bull, such as the Egyptians worshipped. He only meant it for an image; he told the crowd in so many words that it was intended to represent the God of Israel. But the crowd hailed it as the God of Egypt—the presence by which the *Pharaohs* had prospered. They forgot their patriotism. They cried, in effect, 'Let the Egyptian omen be our omen!' They broke into shouts of joy; but the shout of joy was a shout of rebellion.

Now this scene of tumult and uproar came from the vacillation of Aaron. He had manifested a spirit of accommodation, a tendency to move with the crowd. In contemplating the picture in the Gallery, my wonder has always been why Moses is represented in an attitude so lenient towards Aaron. We do not, indeed, associate Aaron with the rebellion of the crowd, nor deem that he was worthy of their penalty. But Aaron is not only pardoned—he is promoted; he is raised to that position of eminence in the church which is denied him in the state. With the full knowledge of his vacillating spirit, with the full proof before

the world that he had been guilty of compromise, this man is invested with the High Priest's office, with the chief pastorate of the great congregation. I am looking at the matter merely artistically—from the standpoint of a spectator in the Gallery. Keeping purely to the aesthetic, I ask, is it not a breach of art, a violation of the law of harmony, a dislocation in the proportion of things? What *is* the problem? It is this: a man rejected by the state as unfit to be a leader by reason of his vacillating spirit is by that same state selected to be the head of a religious community within its own pale! I have never found the Great Gallery defective in matters of proportion; I have never known the hand of its artists to apply inappropriate colours. But is there not such a misapplication here? Is there not in this picture an inartistic element, a breach of consistency which mars its beauty? We can understand that a stone once rejected should afterwards become the head of the corner, provided its rejection were found to be a mistake; but that a stone should be made the head of the corner which was once rejected and which is still known to possess the defect attributed to it—this is surely a fault of the builder!

But I think we have forgotten one thing of great importance—the difference of qualification requisite for a leader in the state and a leader in the church. The quality which would be a blemish in a rock is a beauty in a flower—tenderness. That a rock should be easily bent or broken is a proof of its unfitness; but that a rose should be easily bent or broken is an element in its charm. The simile has direct application here. The leader of a state ought to be unbending; firmness is essential to successful government. But the pastor in a congregation ought not to be unbending. His province is that of a servant. It is required before all things that he should be a man of human sympathy—able to adapt himself to the needs of each time. The characteristic of the individual church-leader and the characteristic of the Church universal must always be one of accommodation to circumstances. That is the secret of *Christianity's* power. It has been durable amid shifting epochs just because it has been willing to assimilate these epochs. The stream has been content to take its colour from the soil through which it flows; therefore it has irrigated many soils. It has turned its ear to the special needs

of special ages. It has not granted *all* for which each crowd has clamoured; but it has granted something—it has recognised that every widespread clamour implies a widespread want. It has met the cry for imperialism; it has met the cry for freedom; it has met the cry for asceticism; it has met the cry for earthly loveliness; it has met the cry for reconciliation between religion and science. This priesthood has conquered by stooping, has reigned by serving, has endured by veiling what is not essential to its faith. Its power of survival has been its power of accommodation.

Let me put a supposition. Let us imagine that the man selected to fill the High Priest's office had been, not Aaron, but Joshua. A greater contrast than that between Aaron and Joshua cannot be conceived. If Aaron was vacillating, Joshua was unbending; if Aaron was soft, Joshua was inflexible. The future leader of the army of Israel was a man of no compromise. To him it was enough that the law had once been given; to be once given was to be enforced permanently. We know that on account of this quality Joshua was made head of the state; why was he not made

head of the church? Though a little younger, he was contemporaneous with Aaron; he lived in the same environment; he was familiar with the same conditions of life. Why did the Gallery not select *him* as the pastor to the great congregation? Clearly because church and state require opposite types of mind. Joshua made a great leader to the army; he would have made a very poor leader to the church. The reason is that, while the army wants an *absolute* leader, the church does not. The church leader must be content to be, in a measure, *led*. He must consent, in certain things, to *follow*. He must watch the course of the stream. He must observe the current of the time. He must consider the state of the tide. Aaron was chosen because he was such a man as that. No other type of mind but the bending mind will suit the church leader. Aaron erred, not by his efforts at conciliation, but by his means of conciliation; instead of making a golden calf, he should have told the clamouring crowd that they would soon have a visible tabernacle. His error was, after all, one of detail. The principle was misapplied, but it was good and true. The man who can feel the pulse of the multitude and suit his

gospel to their needs is the man who merits the foremost place in the sphere of the pastoral office.

And this to my mind furnishes the explanation of an incident in the life of Aaron to which I think no other explanation has lent any significance. Twelve rod-branches of the almond-tree are deposited in the tabernacle. Each rod represents a secular power; they stand respectively for the twelve heads of the twelve clans or tribes of Israel. To these rods another is added—making thirteen. The thirteenth is the rod of Aaron—representing the spiritual as distinct from the secular power. On the day after they have been placed in the tabernacle, Moses enters the building and finds a wonderful phenomenon. The twelve rods remain as they were when first deposited; but the thirteenth—the rod of Aaron—has burst forth into bloom.

Now, what is the ideal significance of this? To me it clearly means that in the tabernacle of God, in the sphere of the religious ministry, the forces which will survive are not the secular forces. None of the twelve rods of temporal power will flourish here. The very thing which makes them survivors in the world

would kill them in the church—their inability to bend. They can bud in secular life, because the secular ruler reigns by the exercise of authority. But the spiritual life is not ruled by the exercise of authority. It is ruled by the veiling of authority—by sacrifice, by love. Only one rod will blossom here—the rod of Aaron! Only one power will bear fruit here—the power of stooping! Within this holy temple the laws of survival are altered, reversed! The things which once disqualified, become the source of life; the rod which would in the outward kingdom have only served for firewood becomes, in the spiritual sphere, a sceptre of potent power!

The strength of Aaron, then, is to lie in something which in the secular province would be called weakness—the capacity to be bent by the troubles of the crowd. We have a fine and a typical instance of this in the sixteenth chapter of Numbers, where Aaron is seen standing 'between the dead and the living.' He appears as the intercessor for stricken humanity. A dreadful plague has fallen—fallen as a vengeance. The anger of the God of Israel has been kindled, and thousands lie low beneath the stroke of the pestilence. Then

follows a scene of sublime humanitarianism. Aaron takes his place among the stricken, and pours forth his prayer to heaven. He stands on the pestilential field whose atmosphere is reeking with contagion. In front of him are the remaining members of the congregation who are still untouched—trembling, cowering, anticipating. Behind him are the dying and the dead—a ghastly concourse. Aaron is *in* that charnel-house. He stands on no hill apart from the multitude. He utters his prayers from no palatial retreat securely embowered against the entrance of infection. He comes down into the foul air, into the vile miasma. He identifies himself with the *case* of the dead, of the dying, of those who are preparing to die. His attitude is that of a participator, of one who wishes to be numbered among the transgressors. He could have been no coward —to face the virulence of a deadly and contagious malady! It throws a fresh light upon his attitude towards the worshippers of the golden calf. We commonly attribute that attitude to timorousness; is it not more likely to have been the fruit of pity! Was it not simply another phase of humanitarian sympathy—that same humanitarian sympathy which here

prompts him, in the hour of pestilence to take his stand beside his stricken brethren!

And this has ever since been the characteristic note of the Bible priesthood. In this sphere the rod of empire has habitually burst into softness. The true priesthood has ever been a service of man; every stage of its development has been a stooping further down. Step by step it has descended into the depths of human care and human sorrow. Step by step it has identified itself with the lot of the suffering and the sinful, till it has reached the last valley of humiliation at the Cross of the Son of Man. Aaron did not, any more than Moses, *enter* the land to which he was going. To both it was only a promised land. Each had a mountain view of coming glory; each died in the faith of a world to come. But to posterity the world of each *has* come. The land whose dominion was prefigured to the eye of Moses has more than realised his dream; the priesthood which floated before the sight of Aaron has attained a grander goal than *his* fancy pictured. The brothers have each had their reward, and each a reward after his kind. Moses bore the secular sceptre and he has inherited the crown of Christen-

dom; the highest thrones of the world are built upon his Law. Aaron bore the rod which blossomed into a passion-flower, and it has issued in the Cross of Calvary; the climax of the heart's devotion is the Sacrifice of Jesus.

ENDOW me, O Lord, with the priestly spirit; consecrate me to the service of Thy tabernacle! Help me to take my place with the stricken sons of the wilderness! I do not ask to be enabled to pray for them on the height; let me come *down* from the height! Let me stand in the scene of the pestilence! Let me touch the lepers' spots ere I say 'Be thou clean'! Often have I thought of these words, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore him in the spirit of *meekness*'! I have seen those who would restore in the spirit of pride; they speak to the fallen, but they speak from the mountaintop. Not thus would *I* restore, O Lord. I would come with Thy Christ down from my heaven; I would empty myself with Him. Let me descend with Him into the manger! Let me breathe the atmosphere of the beasts of the stall! Let me wrap myself in the

humble garments of a child of earth! Let me join in the common struggle of the sons of Nazareth! Let me accept the same baptism that is offered to the vilest! Teach me that for the healing of a soul there is more virtue in the touch than in the ointment! Let the touch precede the text; let the pity precede the precept; let the kindness precede the kingdom; let the brotherhood with man precede the breath of God! Let me meet the fallen in their own valley, the desolate in their own ruin, the broken in their own desert, the wandered in their own night! Then shall I be in truth one of Thy Royal Priesthood.

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